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Dragon®

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ProFile on Fantasy Artist

Todd Lockwood

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DEL REY **profiles**

NAME: Friar Eldritch Maledictus

PROFESSION: Abbot, Order of the Accursed Monks of Our Lady of Perpetual Anguish

HOBBIES: Meditation, contemplation, bread baking, heretic torturing, meddling in affairs of state, rites, rituals, chanting, manuscript illumination, conjugation of Latin swear words, silence

QUOTE: "Sin happens."

HIS DRINK: Sacrificial...uh, sacra*mental* wine.

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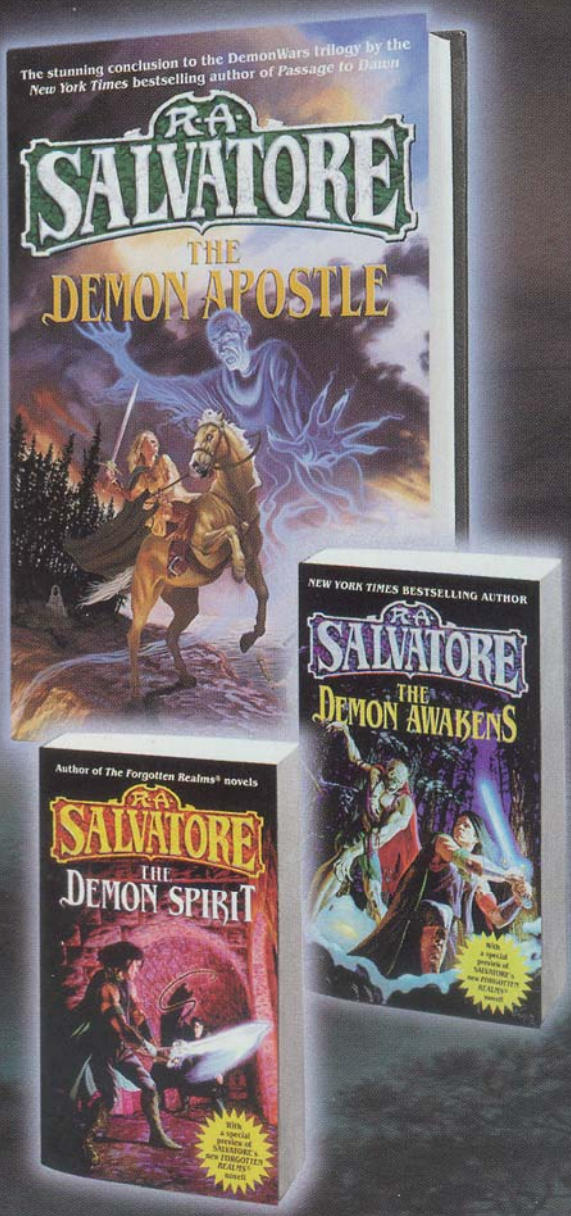
"Three sets of eyes came up, the terrified goblins staring at each other, none daring to speak a word.

"Nightbird dropped from a branch to land right between them. Out went his fist, out went the ball pommel of his sword, then ahead came the flashing blade. A backhand strike took down the second, slashing diagonally from shoulder to hip, as it staggered from the force of the driving pommel, and then the ranger reversed his momentum and spun about, dropping a powerful overhead chop on the first as it tried to recover from the punch in the face, as it tried to bring its unwieldy spear to bear.

"It took the ranger longer to extract Tempest from the goblin's head than it had to kill all three."
—from *The Demon Apostle*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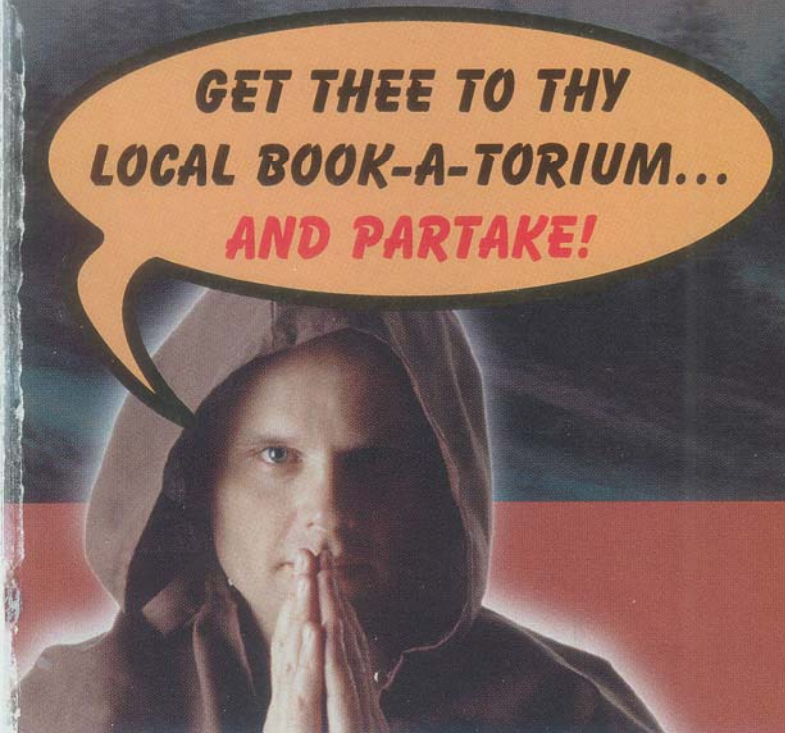

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LOCKWOOD '98

Mage vs. Machine

Dragon®

Issue # 258 Volume XXIII, No. 11 April 1999

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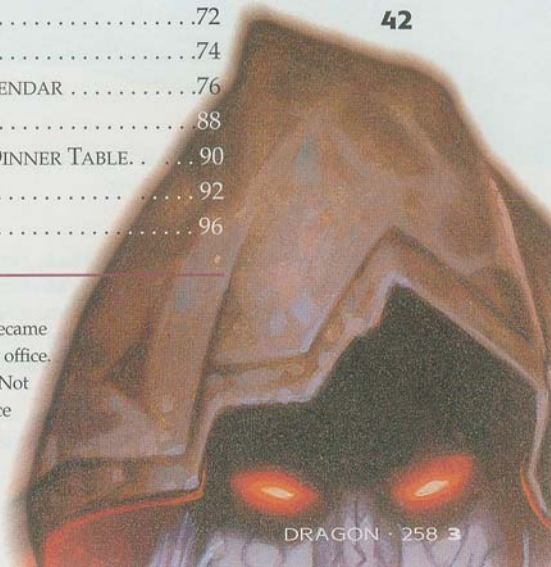
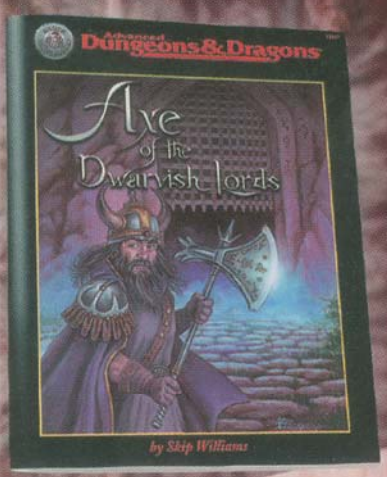
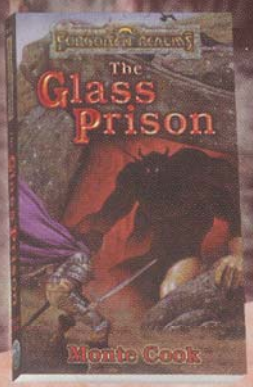


On the Cover

Todd Lockwood's cover illustration was destined to become a classic long before this issue went to press. It became an office favorite, providing me with a steady stream of visitors for the few days the painting remained in my office. With reluctance, I finally sent it off to the scanner department (where the image gained a new legion of fans). Not long after, it was chosen to appear on a 1999 promotional calendar. This dramatic painting even inspired Bruce Cordell to write the main feature, detailing Todd's mechanical terrors and the Wizards who fight them. Todd created and illustrated additional sheens for the article. Don't miss Todd's "ProFile" on page 96.

1805: Napoleon officially





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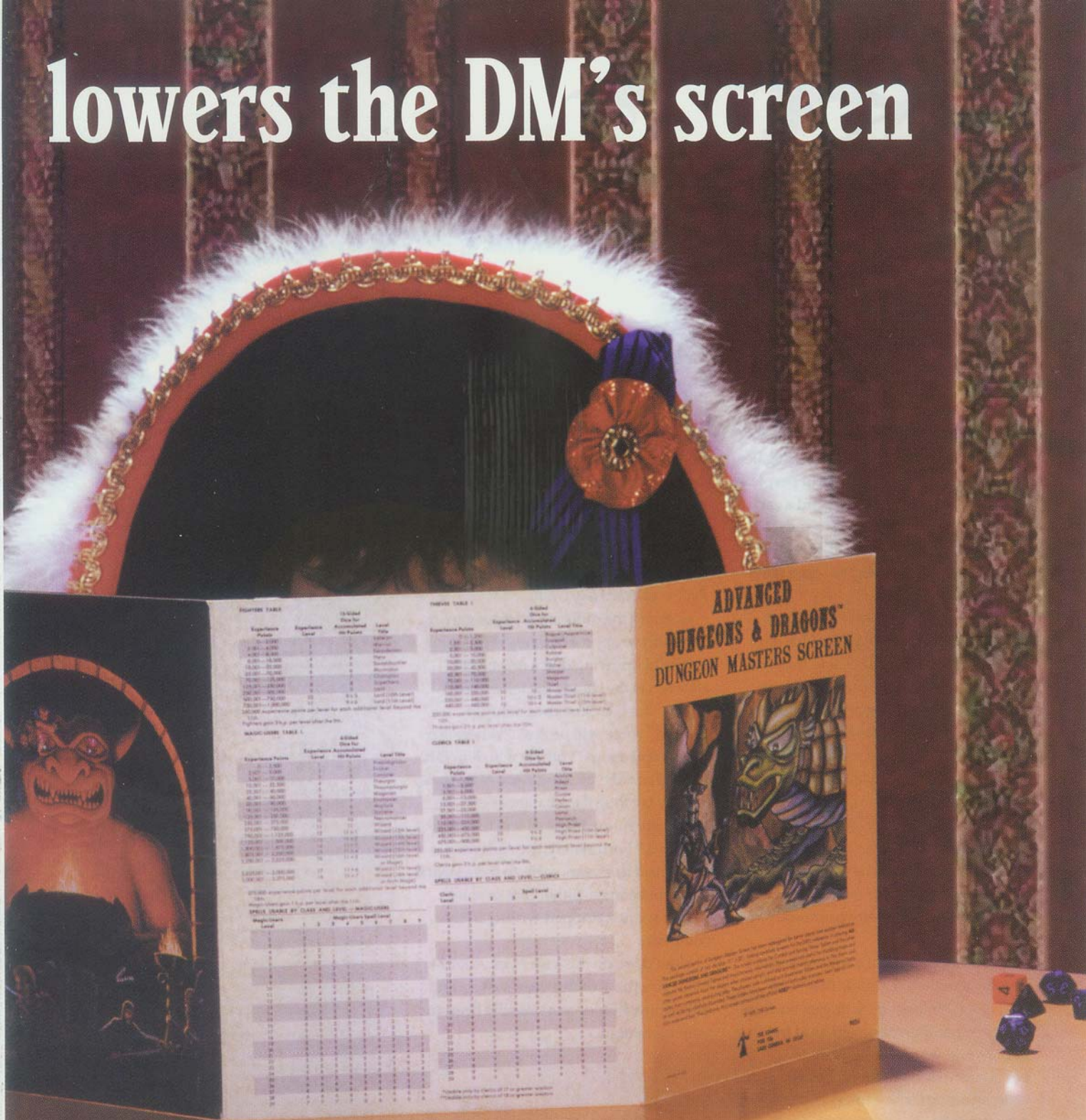

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The Wyrm's Turn™

Lighten Up

Laughter is universal, but what's funny isn't. A joke can elicit gales of laughter and stares of perplexity from the same audience, and a cartoon strip can seem insipid to some but brilliant to others. Likewise, humor in roleplaying games delights some players but annoys others.

Some players just don't like funny business in their roleplaying. One bad pun or silly halfling NPC, and they flee the table. Fortunately, these are a rare breed, mostly ex-wargamers still bitter about the rise of roleplaying.

Most gamers have a sense of humor, as proven by the popularity of "*DragonMirth*™" and other gaming cartoons. We don't mind when a TV show pokes fun at us, as long as they get the game terms right. Beyond our ability to laugh at ourselves, however, gamers treat humor quite differently in their various campaigns.

Some campaigns take humor to such lengths that they resemble Brit-coms more than fantasy epics. Vorpal bunnies and holy hand grenades abound in these games, and you're more likely to encounter a fighter named Bob than one called Aragorn. The gamers from these groups are fun if sometimes giddy folks, but you probably don't want to invite them over every weekend. It would be too silly.

More gamers opt for an occasional humorous interlude or comic-relief NPC. The bard in these groups might be a funny gal, but the townsfolk aren't likely to break out into song, and the halflings don't employ joy buzzers when shaking hands.

Some gamers can't play a single session without some clowning around, but they like their humor kept "out of character." For them, it's OK to make jokes at the game table, as long as the characters themselves don't start forming dance lines and reciting lines from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail.*

Keeping the different types of gamers in mind, we approach every April issue carefully, knowing that a few weeks after it hits the stands the letters will begin to arrive. "Too much stupid humor!" some will protest. "Where are those great songs?" others will demand. It's perhaps the trickiest issue of the year, and we try to strike a balance between genuinely funny features and the "serious stuff." Fortunately, the April issues of the past few years seem to have struck the right balance. Either that or some folks have just stopped writing in to complain.

How'd we do this year? Let us know what you think of this year's issue, and tell us how humor rears its silly head in your campaign.

Dave Gross
Editor

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Dispensing with the Praise

Let's dispense with the praise, shall we? I'll just say I agree with all the praise I've read in the issues since the renewal of my subscription. The magazine has shown great improvement, especially but not only in graphics.

Two things I love and would like to see continue in the magazine are the house rules suggested in "Forum" and articles with lots of adventure hooks, as in "Sufficiently Advanced Magic" from issue #253. I don't mean that every article must include adventure hooks to be good.

One Alternity® game article per issue is not only acceptable but vital! Expanding one's horizons never hurts. The only way to advance in one discipline (or game) is to learn something from a different perspective.

Oran Magal
20 Ilanot Street, Kefar Maas
49925 Israel

through each issue looking for a Dark Sun article or any other article that can fit into a Dark Sun campaign. When there's nothing there, I still read the issue, of course; it just doesn't hold as much for me.

I suggest you include a "Campaign Classics" article each issue. The column would only be a total of four pages long. On each page of the column would be a bit of campaign info on each of the four major campaign settings that have been put on hiatus, including the Dark Sun, Birthright®, Mystara®, and Spelljammer® campaigns. This way, others like me, whose sole love in gaming is a dead line, have a reason to buy your magazine each issue. One page per setting would be nothing in terms of space, but it would spark many ideas for DMs of these lost campaigns who have to search hard for inspiration. Please think about this consistent format for "Campaign Classics." I and many other Dark Sun fans would be eternally grateful.

Robert Adducci
Scottsdale, AZ

One Alternity game article per issue is not only acceptable but vital!

Constant Campaign Classics

I started DMing in 1991, the year the Dark Sun® campaign came out. The Dark Sun setting is the only one I use as a DM. I've been subscribing to *Dragon® Magazine* for only a year, and I must say I love the new look. The magazine is much more streamlined and eye-pleasing than even a year ago.

I really enjoy the "PC Portraits" section; it's now one of my favorites, next to "Sage Advice" and "D-Mail." I must say my favorite feature is "Campaign Classics," Dark Sun specifically. I tear

While we won't be making "Campaign Classics" a monthly feature—we simply don't receive enough good articles to make that work—we'll surely print a Campaign Classic whenever we find a good, useful one, like "Life-Shapes of Athas" in issue #255. Why not send in a proposal for your own Dark Sun article? The writers' guidelines are available for a self-addressed, stamped envelope or a visit to www.tsr.com.

The Real Cast

I am writing in response to Patrick Seymour's letter in issue #253 regarding the development of player characters, their background, and their motivation. I am willing to throw my hat into the ring as long as Mr. Seymour swears never to call me "old-timer." (I would accept "Grand Sage" or even "O Captain, my Captain.")

My background includes eighteen years of roleplaying games and eight years of professional acting experience. I have given seminars (entitled "What's your motivation?") at the Gen Con® Game Fair and other conventions. It will take some time for me to organize my ramblings and put them down on paper to submit, however. In the meantime, anyone may feel free to write to me (yes, snail mail) at the address below.

I would like to comment on Steven Poer's letter and the several responses to it regarding a Dragonlance® movie. Movies are quite a gamble. They can reap huge rewards or drive you to ruin. Fantasy films are especially difficult, as they are not seen as commercially viable. Films such as *Dragonslayer, Willow, Dragonheart,* and *Ladyhawke* can't compare to *Star Wars, Indiana Jones,* or *Titanic* in terms of money, and money is the bottom line.

Another point to consider is that movies from novels must be condensed, sacrificing much of the total story. A made-for-TV miniseries might go over better in terms of scope. However, taking into account the high production values required (i.e., magic, dragons, special effects, etc.), an animated series might be an easier sell.

Big-name stars are both an asset and a liability. They help draw the mainstream audience, but their high salaries and schedule conflicts are difficult to work around. When possible, it is better to go with actors who best fit the role, whether they are well known or not. An unknown does not detract from the film with comparisons to their previous work, and it's cheaper. But, if I had my choice for a "dream-team" of known actors, here is a sample:

Director: Steven Spielberg. A great director of both dramatic and action movies who used to play the D&D® game.

Tanis: Noah Wyle. Yes, the guy from *ER*. Not many people can play the "reluctant leader" type, yet he does so very well. His face has the long, youthful, trustworthy look needed for a half-elf.

Sturm: Johnathan Frakes. He has the knightly posture required and would still look good with the mustache.

Caramon: Arnold Schwarzenegger. Actually, a young version of him. Someone large and well built, with some acting ability. Any ideas?

Raistlin: Me. Hey, it's *my* list! Any actor would sell his soul to the Dark Queen for that role. Oh, all right, Brent Spiner. A good actor with experience wearing heavy make-up and contact lenses.

Flint: Billy Barty. You young folk remember him as the old magician from *Willow*. He is a great actor, and the fact that dwarves and gnomes must be played by little people just makes him perfect.

Tas: A tough call. Kender have a child-like quality and innocence that needs to be portrayed by either real children (who grow up before the sequel!) or very small adult women akin to Mary Martin in Peter Pan. If an adult, Yeardly Smith from *The Simpsons*. She has the height for it, plus her voice is low enough to pass as a male kender.

Tika: Jeri Ryan. I do not know if that red hair will do her justice, but she has shown the ability to go from scared little girl to a strong woman in the same role. Now all she needs is the hair and the frying pan.

Goldmoon: Cate Blanchet. Featured in *Elizabeth*. She has the strong presence and powerful voice the role demands of the Que-Shu princess.

Riverwind: Adrian Paul. His role in *Highlander* is similar to the stoic barbarian.

Fewmaster Toede: Danny Devito. After his role as the Penguin, is there any doubt?

Kitiara: Catherine Zeta–Jones, from *The Mask of Zorro*. A dark beauty who can wield a sword with the best of them.

Lord Soth: John DeLancie. This would be done as a voice-over part. His low, menacing voice coming from armor containing only a black void and two glowing red eyes.

Fizban: Patrick Stewart. One of the few actors who could be both a befuddled mage and a god at the same time.

Dalamar: Tim Russ. Imagine a thoroughly evil Tuvok. Now that is scary!

Laurana: Nicole Kidman. Her sharp features and slim build have a very elvish look.

Alhana: Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, another *Willow* alumnus. She also has strong elven features.

Various Dragon Voices: Sean Connery, James Earl Jones, Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins, Leonard Nimoy, Michael Dorn, Avery Brooks.

Of course, these are my personal choices based more on talent than looks. Any other suggestions, comments, or criticisms? Feel free to write to me about anything.

Sean Kelley
467 W. Hayes
Hazel Park, MI 48030-2444

Miniatures on Parade

I enjoyed the editorial in *DRAGON® Magazine* #253, since I have been painting miniatures for years. I got my first sets for Christmas around 1980: eight boxes of Grenadier miniatures. I'll admit, my first attempts at painting left a lot to be desired, and for a long time I simply used unpainted miniatures on a piece of graph paper to help conduct battles.

In college, however, I met some other painters, and an excellent painter named Bob Parkinson gave me a few tips. I started shadowing and highlighting my small creations, even painting for various members of my gaming groups.

I especially like to paint miniatures of the characters I play or, more often, important NPCs in the game. As mentioned in the editorial, I often try to make the character look like the

Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
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miniature, using the figure to inspire me to choices I might not have normally made. One of my most recent miniatures (Krandon, a dwarf) sported a fancy helmet that became a family heirloom for the NPC in game play.

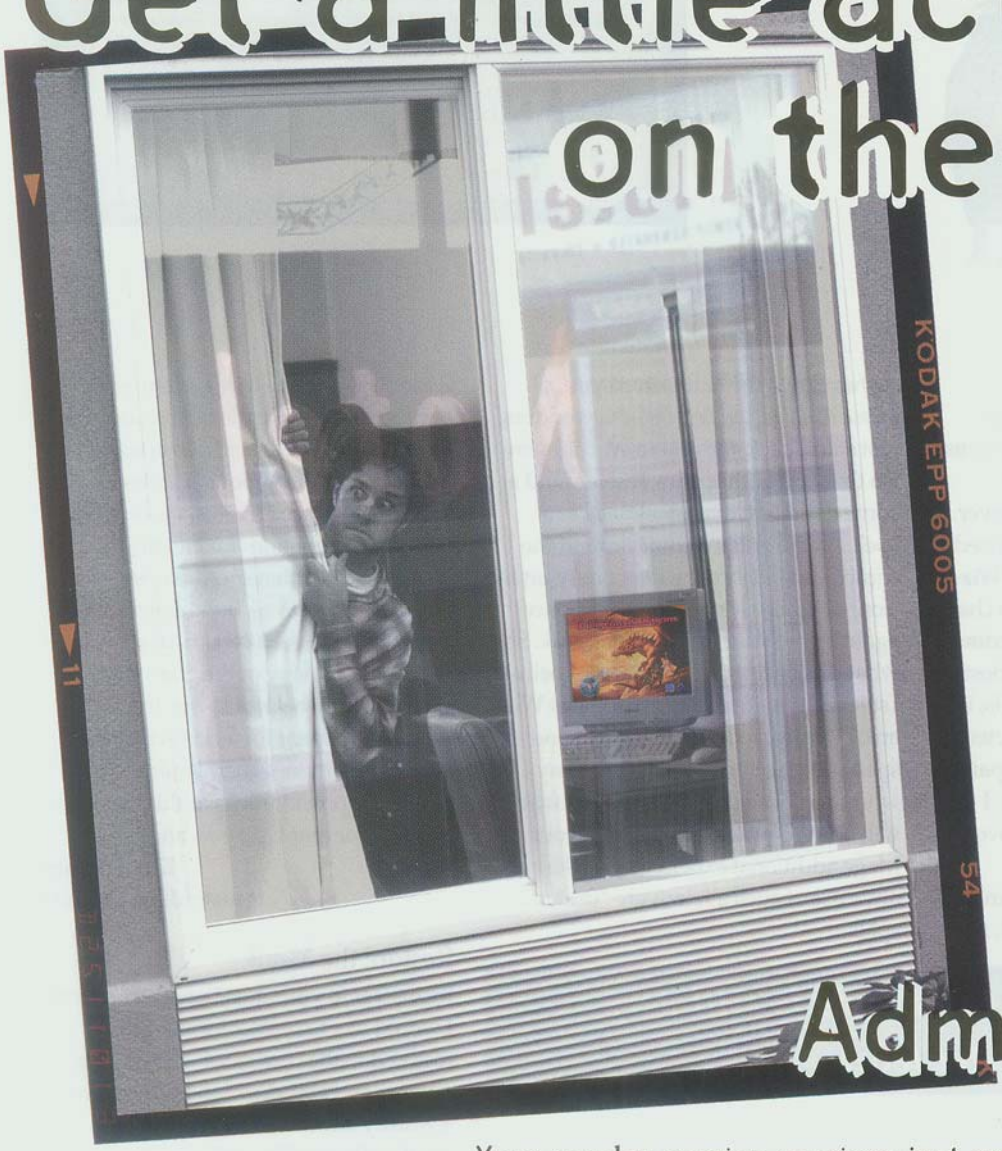
Villain NPCs are the best subjects for miniatures. It gives the players something to associate with their arch-enemies. Ral Partha (my favorite miniatures company by far) came out with an evil queen that I painted for one campaign I ran in the early 90s. Every time I pulled the miniature out, the entire group would start flipping through their character sheets, searching for their best weapons, magic, and attacks. Though the evil sorceress, Gambriel, was finally destroyed by her own magic, I kept the miniature handy at games to make the players nervous.

The group I DM for now uses miniatures to enhance the game. Presently, only a few of the PCs and one NPC are painted, though I'm working on my girlfriend's miniature now, and the arch-villain that the PCs will eventually face is sitting on my painting table, ready for a base coat.

I based Earthgor and Dax (NPCs in an article I recently submitted) on miniatures. Both are from the Grenadier boxes of the early 80s. (Earthgor is the Mage with the *crystal ball* from the "Wizards" box, and Dax is the gnome Illusionist from the "Specialists" box.) I painted Earthgor with gray hair and a red robe covered with yellow dots, moons, and smiley faces. He, of course, holds a magic 8-ball. Dax is in purple (with silver dots). I've sent you some photographs, though I really don't have the equipment to photograph them well.

Andy Miller
Edgerton, OH

Get a little action on the side.



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Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

Which is the most powerful character class?
Which is the weakest?
How would you change them?

More on Wizards

Having read Dennis R. Rose's letter "Weenie Wizards" (in issue #255), I must disagree with most of his analysis regarding the Mage class. I have never had a problem playing a single-classed Mage (or the occasional Specialist Wizard). In fact, nine out of the last ten characters I played were Wizards of various sorts (the sole exception being a Priest of Azuth). As for the DM fudging rolls, it probably happens for every character class, but not that often in the campaigns in which I have participated. Thus, I feel that the class as it stands is still powerful, even at 1st level.

Mages should never look for combat and the offensive solution. Instead, they should think defensively. I agree that Wizards of any kind are fatally weak in melee combat (initially), but this is not their area of expertise. They are the keepers of knowledge, not combatants. Research the subject of the adventure, gain contacts with the locals, hire bodyguards and henchmen as often as you can, use a *find familiar* spell, and most of all, prepare for anything.

The Wizard class as it stands is still very powerful, even at 1st level.

Sure, the *magic missile* spell is wonderful, but give me a *hold portal* spell any day. As a character (especially a Mage), I am smart enough to run away from something that the party can't handle. Once the party has made its escape, we can then develop a plan to defeat the obstacle. Look at the spells available to the 1st-level Mage, but think with a little more creativity. When a party of goblins rushes down the hall toward you, a *grease* spell on the floor works wonders. Just stand back and let the Warriors finish them off with spears. Run around a corner, and cast that *phantasmal force* spell. As the goblins come around the corner and fall into the illusionary pit in front of you, just stand back and once again let the Warriors do their work. So what if your Mage only has one spell at 1st level (two if you are a Specialist Wizard)? When used creatively, that one spell can do quite a bit of work. Any DM who uses individual experience awards will be hard pressed not to give your Mage additional experience for the creative use of such a relatively "useless" spell.

Just look at the great Wizards of literature; most rarely use their spells at all. They tend to defeat their foes through the use of other people, trickery, or good timing. For example, Gandalf casts few spells that would be higher than 3rd level in the AD&D® game. Yet, he still comes across as a being of great power and vast knowledge and is thus greatly feared by his enemies.

Paul D. Thompson
Superior, WI

No New Classes

I'd like to give my opinion about the "Question of the Month" in issue #254. ("Which classes, if any, should be restored to the core AD&D game?")

None of them should be restored. In fact, I would like to see only the four basic classes in the core system—not because I don't like the other classes but because they are specific. Instead of describing these optional classes, I would like to see an improved system and some guidelines for creating new classes. I know that such a system is already in the *DMG*, but this system seems to have been constructed rather quickly, and many of the guidelines weren't really helpful to me. If a few pages were spent for a class-creating system and more general guidelines given, the possibilities would drastically increase for many players and DMs.

Derek Groen
Amsterdam, Holland

Restore the Monk

In answer to your question of the month, I would like to see the Monk class restored to the core rules. The unique powers and abilities of the class make it a worthy addition and give players another Rogue-like option without getting mired in the moral questions posed by the Assassin class. To those of you who feel the Monk is too "Oriental" in flavor, please remember AD&D is a fantasy game, so what may seem odd in our world (the Monk in a medieval setting) is not necessarily so in a world where the DM controls the culture. (By the way, the Monk class I refer to is the one originally presented in the 1st-Edition *PH*, not the one in the *Oriental Adventures* book.) Besides, the cultural flavor of the Monk could be eliminated simply by changing the class's weapon selection.

Moving on to my vision of a 3rd Edition, I think it should be two books, a *PH* and *DMG* with no redundant information. The *PH* should contain the information needed to make a character.

Character classes should include all classes ever created for the AD&D game, including Assassins, Cavaliers, Barbarians, Samurai, Ninja, and so on. Why not? If a DM doesn't like something, he'll just throw it out and not use it anyway. Oriental classes could be re-named and re-worked to make them more European in flavor, as was done with the RED STEEL™ setting. With this much variety, kits could be eliminated. I feel kits have unbalanced the game more than any character class ever could. Include classes such as the Battlecaster and the Witch presented in *DRAGON® Magazine*. Throw it wide open.

Next, include an expanded proficiency list that incorporates the many proficiencies published in supplemental books, re-working them as needed. Follow this with an equipment list like that in the *Arms & Equipment Guide*, and finish it off with expanded spell and psionics lists. Without any redundant material, I believe all this could be done with an efficient use of page space.

The *DMG* should include the rules and magical items. I wouldn't suggest any dramatic rule changes—the system has stood the test of time. The only minor suggestion I might make is to include some of the expanded rules from *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Combat & Tactics*—but not the critical hit rules!

Neil Palmquist
North Huntington, PA

Roleplaying Alignment

Matt Locey, in his letter in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #254, states that the current AD&D alignment system is more of a hindrance to roleplaying than an asset. I disagree. Alignment can be an aid to roleplaying, provided it is viewed in the manner in which the characters themselves would view it.

To the people who live in an AD&D campaign world, the rules of the game are not just abstract propositions: they are the "laws of nature" that define how their world works. Every character attribute defined by the rules is an aspect of those laws of nature, in that it defines and constrains what the character is capable of doing or determines the likely consequences of various actions. I say "likely" rather than "certain" for an important reason: very few, if any, of the constraints imposed by the rules on characters are absolute. A character with a Strength of 3 can *try* to open a stuck door; he's just a lot less likely to succeed than a character with a Strength of 18. AD&D players understand this and don't complain that the constraints imposed by their characters' ability scores, races, classes, levels, and so forth hinder their roleplaying. Quite the contrary: those constraints and idiosyncrasies are what make characters interesting.

Character alignment is an attribute much like an ability score, race, class, or level; it can determine the likely consequences of certain character actions. The rules explicitly provide for this in a variety of ways; the game penalties for alignment change are only one of them. For example, certain magical items have different effects depending on the character's alignment; some items (such as intelligent weapons) do not work at all except for characters of certain alignments. In the standard cosmology of AD&D, a character's alignment determines what Outer Plane his or her soul goes to after death; in the PLANESCAPE® campaign setting, the alignments of characters can have effects even on the planes themselves. In short, alignment is more than just an abstract label indicating a character's general philosophy and behavior; it can have a variety of very concrete game effects, and these should be viewed as opportunities to enhance roleplaying, just as with the game effects of other character attributes.

The game penalties for alignment change, then, are simply one type of concrete game effect that alignment can have. As such, they ought to be viewed as helping, rather than hindering, roleplaying, especially for characters to whom alignment is important—Paladins, for example. Again, view the matter as it would be viewed by the characters themselves: a Paladin's code of behavior is not just an arbitrary restriction written into the rules but part of what makes him a Paladin. The game world's laws of nature allow certain characters who adhere to a code of honor to gain special abilities. To them, saying that a Paladin ought to be able to act as he wishes without risking his paladinhood would be like saying that one ought to be able to step off a cliff without falling—or more to the point, like saying that Wizards ought to be able to cast spells without memorizing them, or Priests turn undead without remaining true to their faith. Requiring a Paladin character to adhere to a code of behavior is no more detrimental to roleplaying than requiring characters of other classes to abide by their restrictions.

All of my discussion so far has viewed alignment only in the context of overt behavior, *not* in the context of a character's convictions or beliefs. Matt Locey says in his letter that "the fundamental problem with alignment is that it is an internal attribute … intentions, not actions, are good or evil …A DM can never see into the mind of a player's character." It is true that for some

"Umm, tastes like human!"

purposes (determining the effect of an aligned magical item, for example), alignment does have to be considered an "internal" attribute, because the effect depends not on the action taken but on the character taking it. But the whole point about penalties for alignment change, for example (including stripping a Paladin's class), is that they are *meant* to be based on a character's actions, precisely to avoid the knotty issue of intentions and a character's internal mental state. A Paladin doesn't suffer penalties for thinking evil thoughts; he suffers penalties only if he performs evil deeds—that is, deeds that are determined by the laws of nature of his world (the "house rules" of his campaign) to have the consequences normally associated with evil deeds.

Part of the fun of roleplaying is learning to "think like" the character: looking at things the way the character would, given his or her class, abilities, skills, experiences, history—and alignment. And the way you find that out is not by imposing real-world morality or ethics in a fantasy world where they might not fit. Instead, let your character find out the campaign world's own rules.

Peter Donis-Forster
440 Spring St.
Ann Arbor, MI

I see PLAYER'S OPTION rules being to an AD&D 3rd Edition game what* Unearthed Arcana *was to 2nd Edition.

Realtime Responses

I would like to respond to Derek Groen's letter about converting AD&D to "real time." It seems to me that this would prove overly complicated and would drown combat in a sea of math. I dislike the rules on weapon speed—which this system relies on—for two important reasons. First of all, it neglects the advantage of reach. In the game, someone with a dagger usually attacks before someone with a sword (always, with the speed rules in *Combat & Tactics*). In real life, the swordsman would have the advantage, as he can keep the sword between himself and his opponent. The wielder of the dagger could not attack without first exposing himself to attack and would rarely be able to attack first.

Second, the speed reflects only the weight of the weapon, not personal skill or speed. A high-level sword specialist with high Dexterity is still attacked first by a low-level Thief with a dagger.

On the subject of weapons, I can't claim to be a historian like some of the others who have written in, but I would like to see more variety in weapon selection. I see too many swords, and it seems that axes and bludgeoning weapons would cause similar damage and might penetrate armor more easily. Crossbows should probably cause more damage, as they are backed with hundreds of pounds of pressure. Besides that, I don't see how the exact specifications of certain pole-arms and blades is that important; the game isn't meant to be a complete historical re-enactment.

One subject that comes up often in my campaigns is that of martial arts. There are several sets of rules for martial arts in the AD&D game, none of them compatible or completely satisfactory. The best set I've come across was the one in *Combat & Tactics*, which treats unarmed combat the same way as weapons, except that some damage is temporary. This is much better than the chart given in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, which imitates the equally ridiculous wrestling chart from the *Player's Handbook*. The unarmed combat rules from *Combat & Tactics* should be placed in the 3rd Edition *Players Handbook*, with more maneuvers like those in *Oriental Adventures*.

On the subject of character creation, I'd like to see the *Skills & Powers* rules clarified and put into the core system. There are some problems and inconsistencies, but in general they are much better than the previous method of rigid classes and proficiency slots. I see PLAYERS' OPTION rules being to an AD&D 3rd Edition what *Unearthed Arcana* was to 2nd Edition. Since not all players would want to put all that time and effort into character creation, I recommend offering the standard class abilities in groups that cost the same amount as the given points. These players would need to spend points only on proficiencies. Subabilities should either be balanced better or taken from the game entirely, and exceptional Strength should be taken out if subabilities are used.

On the character classes, a few changes would help. Thieves are a bit weak as a class and probably could be balanced better, possibly by adding a few new abilities, such as those in the DARK SUN® campaign, to the standard package. Bards don't really fit into the party structure well; either give them more specific class abilities (as opposed to the jack-of-all-trades angle), or scrap the class. Psionicists are a good, balanced class that should be included in the core rules. Most of the problems that arise from using them come from their being put into systems that did not have psionics in mind; putting them in the core rules would eliminate this problem. I'm not sure what to do with Paladins, because their role isn't clearly defined. A knight is just a Fighter in the feudal structure, and the "holy warrior" angle would imply that gods other than Lawful Good deities would also have them, though likely with different powers. Humans should be permitted to multiclass and should have some natural advantage (more points, I'm thinking) to balance the advantages given to demihumans. I think everyone would prefer that to level limits, which don't make much sense.

Finally, I'd like to respond to Dennis Rose's letter on Mages being too weak at lower levels. I think Mages should advance more quickly at lower levels, as they don't have many spells or other ways of earning XP. They become quite powerful at later levels, however, and should have a slower advancement than other classes when they get to this point. The XP requirements are currently the opposite of this.

Ken Butler
Limerick, PA

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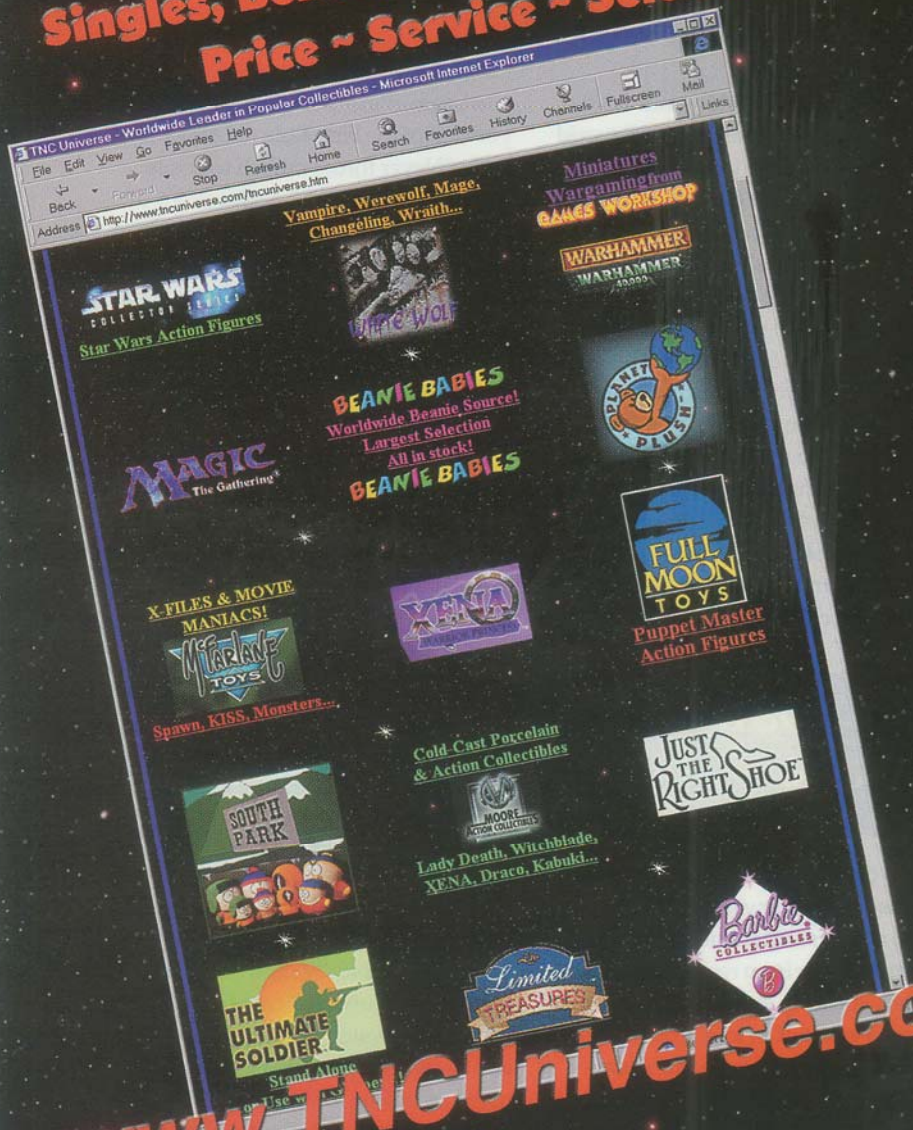

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By Ray Winninger

Last month, we thought about the basic geography of the campaign and put simple political and economic systems into place. This month, we'll flesh out a few details about the gods and religions of the campaign world, giving us everything we need to begin mapping out a starting point for play.

Gods, Myth, and Faith

Gods and faith are important components of the average AD&D® game world for a couple of reasons. Fleshing out the divine forces that shape your fantasy universe gives you an opportunity to tackle some of the "cosmic" questions likely to be on the minds of your world's inhabitants. Where do we come from? How was the world created? What is magic? Your answers to these questions give your world flavor and help your players relate to the cultures you create. Also, don't forget that three of the game's basic character classes revolve around faith (Priest, Druid, and Paladin). It's quite likely that one or more of the players will select one of these classes, so you'll need some details to share with them before play begins.

If you have a copy available, take some time to flip through the pages of *Legends & Lore*, the AD&D game hardback that details a number of real world mythologies in game terms. You won't need nearly as much detail about your own gods as *Legends & Lore* provides, but a good perusal should get your creative juices flowing and get you into the right mood for the work ahead. While scanning *Legends & Lore*, be on the lookout for particularly interesting concepts or myths you can appropriate for your own world. You might even discover an entire pantheon that you can borrow for your game, particularly if you selected a "cultural" hook for your game world (see this column in *Dragon® Magazine* #255). If you choose this path, you might want to change all the names of the gods, as well as a few important details to "file off the serial numbers" and prevent the players from recognizing them. This lets you keep some of the gods' secrets to yourself, at least until revealing them makes the game more fun.

In general, creating your own AD&D mythology is a five-step process.

The rest of this column presumes that you are creating your own mythology from scratch. Any information you borrow from *Legends & Lore* lets you skip one or more of the steps that follow.

In general, creating your own AD&D mythology is a five-step process. Before you begin, it's important to remind yourself of the First Rule of Dungeoncraft: "Never force yourself to create more than you must." At this point, all you need are a few simple details about the gods, their associated legends, and their followers. Although you might be tempted to start writing scores of elaborate legends and crafting dozens of highly detailed religious rituals, try to rechannel that enthusiasm for now. It will soon be needed elsewhere. You can always flesh out your mythology later, after you see how your players react to the bare bones you establish at the beginning. Once you decide to add more detail to your mythology, you might want to consult *The Complete Priest's Handbook*, which includes lots of useful tips and guidance.

1. Choose Polytheism or Monotheism

Your first step is to decide whether your faith is polytheistic or monotheistic. Polytheistic cultures believe in a collection of gods (collectively known as a pantheon). Typically, each of these gods has his or her own sphere of influence (such as air, water, wisdom, fire, magic, and so on), and the pantheon is organized according to some sort of hierarchy, with one or more gods ruling over the others. Polytheism is far and away the model most commonly employed in AD&D game worlds—all of TSR's published settings and all of the cultures detailed in *Legends & Lore* (except the

Arthurian heroes) are polytheistic. Monotheistic cultures, on the other hand, believe in a single supreme deity. Although all divine power resides in this single being, even monotheistic cultures typically recognize a host of lesser divine beings such as saints, angels, avatars, or divine servants.

If you decide upon a polytheistic faith, your next step is to think about the various gods' spheres of influence and sketch out the hierarchy that defines the relationships between the gods. Typical spheres of influence include sunlight, earth, air, fire, water, weather, love, war, death, agriculture, wisdom, art, evil, and magic. Select any of these spheres that you feel are appropriate, or invent your own. You'll find plenty of ideas for other spheres in the pages of *Legends & Lore* or any decent book on world mythology. Try not to select spheres at random. Instead, come up with a reason why these particular spheres have their own dedicated gods. For instance, in a world on which it is believed that all things are composed of the four alchemical elements—air, earth, fire, and water—it makes sense that the four most important gods would command these spheres. If you cannot imagine this sort of direct relationship between spheres, stick to spheres that would have an obvious cultural interest to the inhabitants of your world. A warrior culture has an obvious need for a war god, for example, while a more civilized people might worship gods of wisdom or agriculture.

Typical hierarchies of polytheistic religions have a single god or a mated pair of gods that rules supreme over the others. Sometimes the lesser gods accept the dominion of the chief god, and in other cases they scheme to capture his or her throne. Often, the lesser gods are the offspring of the greater god, though sometimes they are siblings or even totally unrelated by blood. Some hierarchies are quite complex, featuring more than two levels or including several separate and smaller hierarchies. Imagine, for instance, a world shaped by three great gods, none of whom is superior to the others. One god watches over nature, one watches over humans, and one watches over magic. The nature god has three lesser offspring: a sea god, a god of the heavens, and an earth god (who, in turn, has her own offspring, a goddess of agriculture). The god of humans also has three offspring, each representing humankind's most powerful passions: a god of love, a god of art, and a god of war. The god of magic has two offspring: a god of prophecy and a god of death.

Note that such complex hierarchies give you an interesting opportunity to say something about the nature of your world. The previous example, for instance, suggests something about how the inhabitants of the world might behave. Perhaps at any given time, each of the world's residents is under the influence of one of the lesser gods of humanity—love, war, or art. Similarly, the example also defines death (more broadly interpreted as decay or destruction) as a magical effect, perhaps influencing the magic spells you make available in the campaign and prompting you to redefine some of their effects. (If death is a magical effect, characters dying from disease, poison, or injury on such a world might be revealed by a *detect magic* spell.)

While it's ok to invent many gods at this stage, don't force yourself to do so. Whether you envision many gods or just a few, you'll detail only a few major powers before play begins (in accordance with the First Rule of Dungeoncraft). Since you want to share only as much information with the players as necessary to begin play, the big picture should be sketchy enough to allow you to detail other gods later.

If you'd rather employ a monotheistic approach, your only task at this point is to think about any lesser divine entities that serve or oppose your supreme being. Does your god employ servants, saints, or spirits? Were these beings created specifically to serve the supreme being, or were they "promoted" from among the ranks of the faithful who have passed on?

Campaign Mythology in Five Steps:

1. Choose Polytheism or Monotheism
2. Determine the Nature of the Major Gods
3. Describe the Faith & Worshippers
4. Create Two Myths
5. Imagine Other Faiths

2. Determine the Nature of the Major Gods

Your second step is to consider the nature of your major deities (or the single supreme being, if you opted for a monotheistic faith). One of your first decisions is whether your god(s) are "personifications"—that is, whether or not they resemble human beings. The deities that typically crop up in AD&D games (and those appearing in TSR's published settings) are almost all personifications, though some cultures envision their deities as animals, spirits, or even nebulous and mysterious "forces." Opting for personified deities lets you set up more interesting relationships between the gods and makes it easier to generate myths and legends that might be used to propel adventures. On the other hand, non-personified deities are unusual enough to go a long way toward giving your game world a unique feel.

If you decide that your deities are personifications, you should then consider their basic personalities and demeanors. Some pantheons are composed of emotionless, otherworldly beings largely beyond human understanding. Others exhibit all the emotions and imperfections of humanity and are sometimes capable of being duped or tricked by mere mortals. In this latter case, the indi-

vidual personalities of the various gods often stem from their spheres of influence. Sea and fire gods, for instance, are usually short-tempered and overbearing, love gods are carefree, and wisdom gods are thoughtful and taciturn. Try to come up with two or three adjectives that describe the personality of each deity. At this point, you should probably start confining your thinking to the three or four most important members of your pantheon, in accordance with the First Rule. Your goal is to develop only enough information to paint a rough picture and suggest a few options for any players who choose to create Priest, Druid, or Paladin characters.

Give each of your Priest classes major access to three spheres and minor access to three spheres.

If you've opted for more humanistic deities, you should now think about the relationships that exist between the various gods. Are any of your gods particularly good friends or particularly bitter rivals? Why? Sometimes the spheres of influence you have chosen suggest some obvious answers. For example, it's easy to imagine a fire god and a water god who are sworn enemies.

3. Describe the Faith and Worshippers

The next step is to think about how your major gods are worshiped (*only* your major gods–don't forget the First Rule). There are several important questions you should strive to answer. Think first about whether Priests and other worshippers are devoted to a single god or serve the entire pantheon. The former option gives you an opportunity to create interesting variations on the Priest character class, each with its own selection of weapons and special powers (see the Priest section of Chapter 3 in the *Player's Handbook*). A Priest devoted to a fire god, for instance, might have special access to the *fireball* or *wall of fire* spells, while the Priest of a war god might have a broader selection of weapons than the standard Priest class. The downside to this approach is that it forces you to work harder before beginning play; you'll need to create details about how each of your major gods is worshiped. Note that assigning special powers to your own Priest subclasses can be tricky and might easily upset play balance. Unless you have some experience with the AD&D game and a good "feel" for whether a given power is appropriate, try to use the following rules of thumb. Assign each Priest class three special abilities, one gained at 1st level, one gained at 7th level, and one gained at 12th level. The first is no more powerful than a 1st-level spell (of any class), the second is no more powerful than a 3rd-level spell, and the third is no more powerful than a 4th-level spell. Each ability is usable once per day, and any ability that is the equivalent of a Wizard spell is treated as though it was cast by a Wizard of one level lower than the Priest's own level. The Priests of a fire god, for instance, might have the following special abilities: *affect normal fires* at 1st level, *fireball* at 7th level, and *fire shield* at 12th level; a 7th-level Priest of the fire god casts his *fireball* as though he were a 6th-level Wizard. Alternatively, you can assign special powers by finding a similar god in the pages of *Legends & Lore* and borrowing that god's assigned powers, or make use of the more advanced suggestions found in *The Complete Priest's Handbook*. If there is an appropriate nature or forest god in your pantheon, you might simply rule that the Priests of this god are members of the standard Druid class described in the *Player's Handbook*.

In addition to assigning special powers to your Priest classes, you must also decide which spheres of Priest spells are available to them. (See Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook* for a complete description of all sixteen spell spheres.) Although balancing the number of available spheres against the special powers bestowed upon a new Priest class is more an art than a science, again there's a simple rule of thumb you can use. If you followed the guidelines above for assigning special powers, give each of your Priest classes major access to three spheres and minor access to three spheres. The responsibilities and nature of the deity in question should go a long way toward helping select the appropriate spheres from those listed in the *PH*. Priests of our archetypal fire god, for instance, might have major access to the Elemental, Combat, and Sun spheres; and minor access to the Healing, Divination, and Protection spheres. Since a Priest's ability to cast the various healing spells is important to AD&D game balance, you should assign each of your Priest classes at least minor access to the Healing sphere unless there is a good reason not to.

If you decide that the Priests of your world serve an entire pantheon or you've opted for a monotheistic faith, it's likely that your Priest player characters will all use the Cleric class. In this case, it's probably a good idea to re-read Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook* to refresh your memory on the special benefits and restrictions that apply to Clerics. Of course, nothing says that you can't create your own custom Priest classes to handle these characters, as well. You might even present the players with several different Priest classes that all worship the same pantheon or supreme being, but represent different factions or sects within the faith. Perhaps the fundamentalist followers of the pantheon have different abilities than the more mainstream priests, or maybe a special order of Priests within the faith have devoted their lives to a specific task or function. Likewise, there's nothing to stop you from making the Cleric class available to players (representing perhaps a special order of holy warriors or guardians) even if you've decided that most of the clergymen on your world are devoted to a specific deity and are members of the Priest class.

Now that you have some of the mechanics surrounding player character Priests and Clerics in place, think about whether the alignments of the Priest and Cleric classes should be restricted in any way based upon the nature of your gods. Depending on the god's personality and attitude, it might not make sense to

allow Evil-aligned Priests to worship a god of healing. It's almost certainly inappropriate to allow Good-aligned Priests to worship gods of trickery or deceit. Try to make sure that you're presenting enough Priest and Cleric options to accommodate as many alignments as possible, but don't feel compelled to cover every single alignment. There's nothing wrong with deciding that there's simply no such thing as a Chaotic Evil Priest or Cleric in your world.

At this stage, you should also think briefly about what sort of religious services your Priest or Cleric factions hold, whether non-clergy attend these services, and where the services are held. Are services held once per week? Once per month? Are the services held in elaborate temples, sacred groves, or somewhere else? Does the service consist of a reading or lecture? Is there some sort of sacrifice? Don't get too carried away. For now, you need only a few sketchy details to help flesh out the faith. Later, as play progresses, you can elaborate.

Finally, take a few moments to set down two or three tenets for each of your Priest and Cleric class options. At least one tenet should describe a special belief of that class, and at least one other should consist of a special restriction. Your goal here is to give players a few details they can use to help flesh out their characters. Priests of a storm god might believe that all storms are an expression of their god's anger. Priests of a fire god might believe that fire is a holy, purifying force. Sample restrictions include: tithing (the Priest must give 10% of any wealth he receives to the church), chastity (the Priest is not allowed to marry or have romantic relations), enforced prayer (the Priest is required to spend several hours per week in prayer), and honesty (the Priest is not permitted to tell anything but the complete truth under any circumstance). When assigning restrictions, don't get too carried away. Your objective is to provide flavor, not to cripple members of the character class.

4. Create Two Myths

To seem lifelike to your players, your imaginary faith must consist of more than a few dry descriptions and restrictions. A great tactic you can use to add flavor to your religion is to think about its myths or its "explanations of cosmic mysteries." How was the world created? Where did humankind come from? What's the relationship between humans and the various demihuman races? What happens in the afterlife? How did humans discover the secret of fire? How did humans discover the secret of magic? These are all great examples of the sort of questions that interesting myths might tackle.

Before play begins, try to create two myths exploring any topics you choose. You should share these myths with the players just before the campaign begins to give them some idea of what faith and religion on your world are all about. Don't worry about providing anything too elaborate; a paragraph or two will do nicely. This is your opportunity to be creative. For inspiration, consult *Legends & Lore*, or head to the library and spend a couple of hours with a book on world mythology. If you absolutely can't invent any myths of your own, don't be afraid to "borrow" a couple from these sources. Later, as play progresses, you'll create additional myths to flesh out your faith.

Few fantasy worlds are dominated by a single religion.

5. Imagine Other Faiths

Few fantasy worlds are dominated by a single religion. Take a few moments to think about whether there are any other faiths existing on your world that the players are likely to run across in their first few adventures and describe each with a single sentence. You needn't fully detail these alternate faiths using the procedure described in the first four steps unless you are going to allow the players the option of serving as their Priests or Clerics, a step you should take only if it's really necessary. Under most circumstances, you're better off requiring player clergy to stick to your primary faith at the beginning of the campaign.

Nonhuman faiths are a special exception. On most AD&D worlds, the various demihuman races worship their own sets of gods. If you want to follow a similar scheme on your own world, you must be ready to deal with any player who wants to create a nonhuman Priest or Cleric. The easiest solution to this problem is to adopt the official AD&D nonhuman deities into your own world. These entities described in *Monster Mythology*, *Demihuman Deities*, or *The Complete Books of Elves (or Dwarves*, etc.). If you'd rather create your own nonhuman deities, just follow steps one through four above. In this case, you can probably get away with inventing fewer details about the nonhuman deities than you invented for their human counterparts; create perhaps a single god in each appropriate nonhuman pantheon and a single myth.

If at all possible, try to determine the relationship between your primary faith and any alternates you create. Maybe the patriarchs of each pantheon are somehow related, or perhaps the various pantheons signed a sacred pact long ago to divide the world among themselves.

Example: Ray's World

With all the previous points in mind, it's time to return to my own campaign. Looking back at the information I've created in earlier installments, I think a monotheistic approach works best for my world. The "living planet" nature deity functions as a non-personified supreme being.

Moving on to Step Two, I think it's clear that the nature deity is not a personification. She (I've decided that the inhabitants of my world use the feminine pronoun when referring to the supreme being) shares all the attributes of nature—she can be bountiful and serene, or cold and destructive. In previous installments, I've already detailed some of her servants: treants she can imbue with a part of her consciousness and animate when necessary to protect her interests.

As for the faith and worshippers, the

nature deity is honored, for the most part, by an extensive order of Clerics who maintain temples in sacred groves all over the campaign area. This order worships the deity's bountiful side and its members cannot be Evil in alignment. To make things more interesting, I envision two additional orders dedicated to the nature deity. The first is an Evil group that worships the nature goddess in her destructive capacity. Its leader was a high-ranking member of the main order who became seduced by the goddess' capacity for destruction. In civilized (i.e., Good-aligned) areas, this order operates entirely in secret and none of its members ever reveal their true nature to the outside world. The second lesser order consists of clergymen who devote their time and energies to protecting and exploring the world's extensive forests. Made up entirely of Druids, the leaders of this sect are ultimately responsible for protecting the secret tree mentioned in this column in *Dragon Magazine* issue #257. Note that all the clergymen in my campaign (so far) are Clerics or Druids; there are no Specialty Priests.

Services & Tenets of the Main Order

The main order holds special religious services in honor of the nature goddess during each change of seasons; the Clerics of the order spend the rest of their time studying, adventuring, trying to aid members of the flock, and spreading the reverence of the goddess. The services consist of lengthy festivals and banquets attended by most residents of the campaign area and designed to celebrate the goddess and her bounty.

The Clerics of the main order believe that the goddess' bounty is a manifestation of the good and evil of the world's inhabitants. So long as the flock continues to do good deeds, the goddess will deliver a bountiful harvest, the weather will be mild, and her people will enjoy long, peaceful lives. They also believe that owls are sacred; owls are the "eyes" the goddess uses to monitor her flock. Clerics of the main order are required to spend one week of each season alone in the wilderness.

Services and Tenets of the Evil Order

The evil order also holds services during the change of seasons; its Clerics spend the rest of their time trying to attract and corrupt new followers. The evil order's services consist of human sacrifices, ceremonial bonfires, and acts of destruction.

The Clerics of the evil order believe that the main order has blinded itself to the goddess' true nature. Power and understanding, they believe, always stem from suffering and an acceptance of nature's destructive capacity. Clerics of the evil order are required to kill one innocent each season to reaffirm their faith.

Services & Tenets of the Druidic Order

The druidic order holds a service on the night of every full moon, consisting of chanting and a reading of litanies. The Druids believe that the goddess' only daughter (the planet's single moon) will one day take her place in the cosmos; life will eventually die out on the main planet and spring up on the moon. The Druids are required to abide by all the restrictions of the Druid class listed in the *PH*.

Two Myths

One myth commonly repeated across the campaign area is that all the living creatures on the planet are actually a part of the goddess herself. As they move across the planet, they are like blood flowing through her veins. The main order views evil as a sort of cancer infecting the goddess.

A second oft-repeated myth explains the origin of the planet's single moon. Most inhabitants of the campaign world believe that the moon is the daughter of the goddess; it, too, is a sentient, living being. According to legend, the moon was once a continent on the main planet. It was thrown into the sky by a cataclysmic volcanic eruption that took place more than ten thousand years before the campaign begins, a process the clergy equates with childbirth.

Other Religions

I've decided that most of the demihumans across the campaign world don't worship the goddess directly, instead honoring her treant servants. The demihumans view themselves as the treants' heralds and protectors. Humanoids are believed to be demihumans (and their descendants) who were long ago corrupted by evil: orcs were once elves, goblins were once dwarves, etc. Beyond that, I don't envision any other sects that might be significant at this time.

The Second Rule of Dungeoncraft

Of course, now that I've created some new information, the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft (see *Dragon Magazine* issue #255) compels me to invent a secret that is somehow related to that information. I've decided that the Druids are more correct about the moon than they realize; the nature goddess did originally intend for her daughter, the moon, to replace her in the natural cycle. Unknown to the Druids, however, the moon has already birthed the new life form that is destined to replace humankind: mind flayers! (See page 251 of the Monstrous Manual® book for more details.) These creatures are so malevolent that the nature goddess has disowned the moon and is striving to create an entirely new moon to replace her. The mind flayers and their moon goddess, of course, hope to foil this scheme and claim their birthright. While these events won't impact the campaign for some time, they're bound to lead to all sorts of interesting adventures down the road.

That wraps up world building. Next month, we'll take a look at naming and organization. We'll also prepare to draw our first maps.

A regular contributor to Dragon Magazine and TSR, Ray Winninger published his first AD&D material in 1986. He lives in Evanston, Illinois and may or may not believe in a supreme being.

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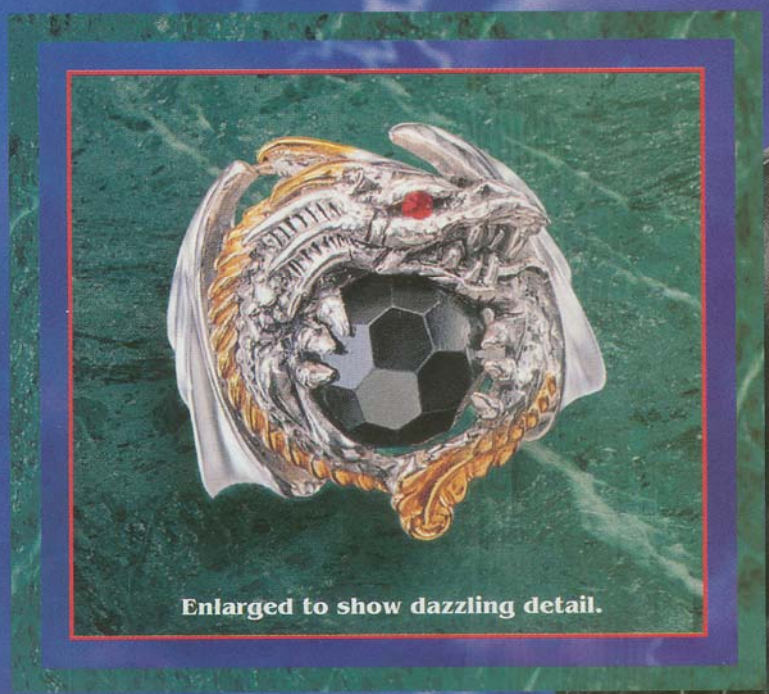

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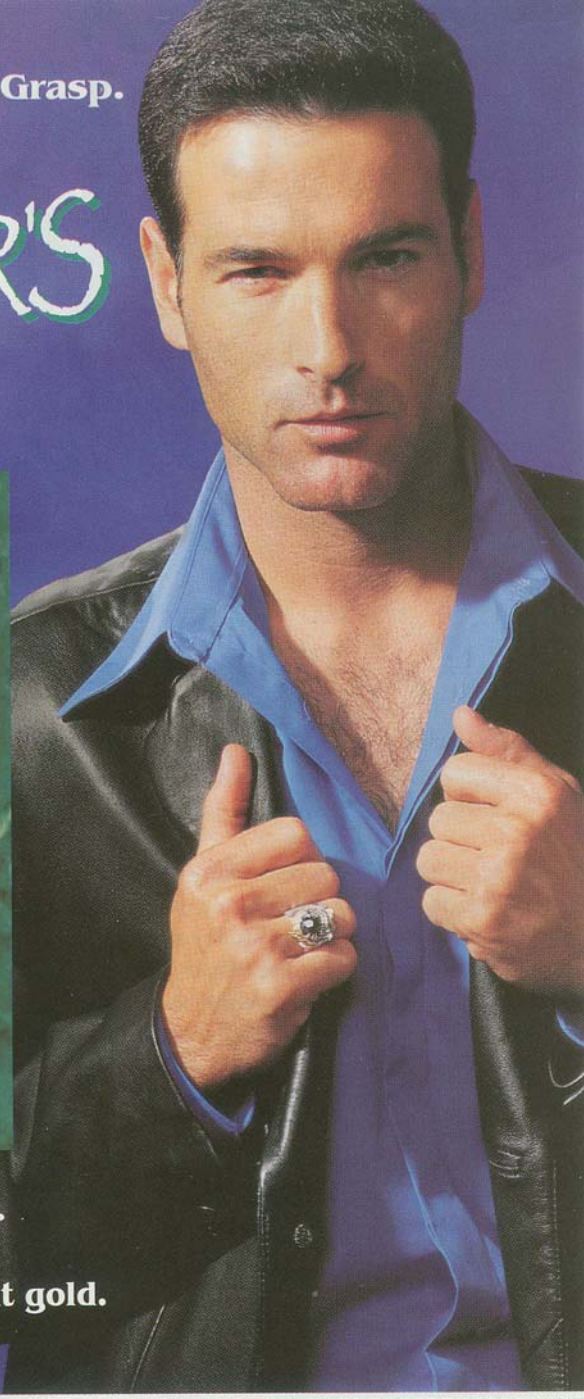

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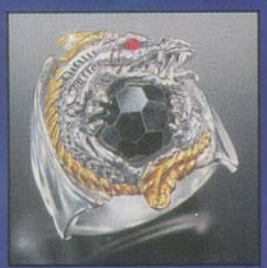

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THE FRANKLIN MINT

Sage Advice

By Skip Williams

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thesage@wizards.com

The sage cannot make personal replies; please include no SASE with your questions.

In a salute to April Fools everywhere, the Sage presents his annual look at the oddest questions received during the past year.

How much does a vial of holy water weigh, and how much liquid can it contain? According to the Money and Equipment chart in the *Player's Handbook*, it weighs 1/10 of a pound and thus contains 1.5 fluid ounces. But according to the Dragonlance® lists, a vial contains 4 oz. (1/4 of a pound). Which is right?

Traditionally, a holy water vial holds ¼ pint of liquid—4 fluid ounces. A fluid ounce is a measure of volume, not weight. Let's see: Water weighs about 8½ pounds per gallon. There are 128 fluid ounces to the gallon, so 4 fluid ounces of water weighs 1/128 (.03125) × 8.5 = .26525 pounds or a little more than a quarter pound, plus the weight of the flask; perhaps about a third of a pound is a reasonable figure for the total weight.

especially if the character knows water can be found a few hours' trek away?

Sounds like a decision for the player to me. If the DM decides that the character is crazy with thirst and might fall upon the wine, a saving throw would be in order (I suggest a petrification save adjusted for Wisdom). Being a brewer and (presumably) somewhat familiar with the effects of alcohol, I suppose the character could claim a bonus to the save, say a +2 bonus.

Note also that an alcoholic beverage does not suck water out of a person's body as salt sucks moisture from a slug. The effect is gradual. A character who has become almost nonfunctional from dehydration might find that a drink of wine (which has a fairly low alcohol content in any case) revives him long enough to reach a source of water. Once the character has plenty of water to drink, the mildly dehydrating effect of the wine wouldn't hurt the character.

Couldn't you use the *haste* spell to effectively "heal" yourself?

A dwarven Fighter/Priest, level 4/4, aged 250, from the Greyhawk® setting, with Wisdom 17, Intelligence 14, and the Brewing proficiency, is extremely dehydrated. Is it safe to assume, that upon discovery of some casks of wine, he would realize that drinking the wine would only dehydrate him further and thus abstain from drinking it,

The *haste* spell ages the recipient a full year physically, not mentally, correct? Therefore, if a character was affected by drow sleep poison, could a Mage cast *haste* on the character and thereby revive him? The poison doesn't last a full year.

A *haste* spell instantly makes the recipient's body a year older, though the mind (Intelligence and Wisdom) is unaffected (see Chapter 2 in the *Player's Handbook*).

If a poisoned character receives a *haste* spell, the character 's body gets a year older. The poison still has its normal duration and effect on the character.

Couldn't you use the *haste* spell to effectively "heal" yourself? I mean, if a year passes, then you'd heal normally—wouldn't you?

No. The real passage of time (or healing magic) heals wounds; instantly becoming a year older doesn't.

Couldn't you use this "healing" to cause damage? If an archer hits a creature with an arrow, can a Mage cast *haste* on the monster or NPC to make the wound heal around the arrow?

No.

What would happen if a character affected by mummy rot was *hasted*? Would the rot affect more of him?

The character physically gets a year older the instant he receives the spell, and the mummy rot proceeds on its normal course.

Since the *haste* spell ages the character, wouldn't the character's hair and fingernails grow?

No.

Since the *haste* spell speeds your metabolism, would a *haste* spell work

on undead creatures? A vampire might be an exception, as it has a metabolism, per se.

Haste (and *slow*) works on any creature unless that creature's description specifically states otherwise. Whether *haste* has any particular affect on the recipient's metabolism is up to the DM.

What would happen if a *hasted* creature were hit by a *sword of wounding*? What if the creature was hit by the weapon and then affected by a *haste* spell?

In either case, the "wound" functions normally.

What is the actual time that passes before the subject of a *haste* spell ages the year? Is it immediate or gradual, aging so much per round? Or does it occur at the end of the spell's duration?

As noted several questions ago, the aging occurs the instant a creature receives the spell.

If the aging effect from *haste* occurs immediately at the end of the duration, what if a character picks up something (a rock, perhaps) that weighs close to his maximum press, and then the aging kicks in? Wouldn't the character grow stronger? In laymen's terms, the characters muscles couldn't normally hold that much weight for a full year, but they do if the aging is an immediate affect. Wouldn't his maximum press now become his new weight allowance, in short having the character gain more Strength?

Instantly becoming a year older doesn't make a character any stronger, no matter what the character does; though it could make the character weaker (Strength loss) and possibly less healthy (Constitution loss) if the aging moves the character into a higher age category. (See Table 12 in the *Player's Handbook*.) Any magical aging visits the ravages of time on the subject's body with none of the benefits.

Were the dragon subdual rules from the original AD&D® game removed so as not to encourage the notion of slavery? Does the absence of a subdual rule now imply dragons would never allow themselves to be sold?

The answer would be no on both counts. Those who revised the game weren't making a social comment; they just replaced the dragon subdual rules with general rules on nonlethal combat. (See Attacking Without Killing in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*.) It's now possible to subdue just about anything, not just dragons.

It's still possible to pound a dragon senseless and try to peddle it on the open market. Subdual damage heals quickly, however, so the task is reasonably dangerous and fairly hard to manage. The local authorities are likely to take a dim view of any party who hangs a "For Sale" sign around a captive dragon's neck and hauls it into the town square on market day. The dragon's not likely to be too pleased either, but if it's convinced that playing along is a safer or more profitable alternative than fighting, it probably won't fight; though it might just be biding its time (as a captured PC might), waiting for an opportunity to turn the tables on its captors.

When a character dies, his or her soul goes to the appropriately aligned plane, so couldn't the character use the rules from the PLANESCAPE® setting to "hop" a portal back to the Prime Material Plane? Don't the PLANESCAPE rules essentially make all characters immortal? Sure, a slain character becomes a petitioner, but a player can still play out the character's attempt to escape the plane, right?

Not quite. A petitioner is linked to the plane where it resides and has no clear recollection of its past life and no desire to continue its previous activities. It also lacks the desire to leave its new home plane. I suppose it's possible to play a petitioner character, but it would be an entirely new character that only superficially resembled the old one.

Note that once slain, a petitioner cannot be brought back to life. If killed on its new home plane, a slain petitioner merges with the plane. If killed away from its home plane, a petitioner is utterly destroyed. In either case, not even a *wish* can restore a slain petitioner.

I was wondering whether it is possible for a magic-resistant spellcaster to cast an *antimagic* shell upon himself, make his magic resistance roll, and gain the benefits of the *anti-magic shell* while still being able to cast his spells normally?

No.

For details, check out "Magic Resistance, Step By Step" in issue #218.

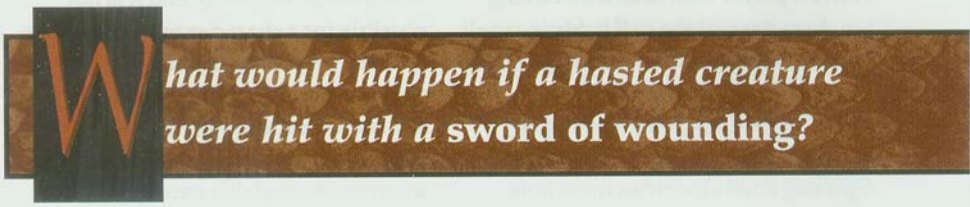
How much does a regular, 2" × 4" board cost? That is, in a forest town or city?

That depends on how long the 2" × 4" is, whether it's finished or not, and what kind of tree the board is from. Assuming the 2" × 4" is like a modern example (soft wood, dried, and planed smooth on four sides), it should cost about 2 copper pieces a foot.

During my group's last adventure, we had the unwanted pleasure of fighting a demon in a cave. Our halfling Thief chose to use his *boots of spider climbing* and Hide in Shadows ability to get the drop on the demon from a 120-foot ceiling, hoping to drag his blade down its back to slow his descent while causing backstab damage. The two bad-guy Mages who conjured the demon had defended themselves and the demon with *protection from normal missiles* and *protection from magical missiles*. Would the halfling, having fallen 60–70 feet to the demon's head, then be considered a missile weapon?

No. Falling on top of an opponent is a grappling or overbearing attack. Slashing with a blade is a melee attack. Combining the two is a charge. Note that the maneuver would not slow the character's fall one bit. The character suffers full falling damage, hit or miss.

I was looking at the stowage capacity rules (Table 50 in the *Player's Handbook*), and they say that a large belt



pouch is 6" × 8" × 2". How do you get your hand in a bag with a width of 2 inches, and if that isn't the opening, the depth will suck.

Think of the bag as a rectangular block 6 inches wide, 8 inches long, and 2 inches thick. The opening is therefore 2 inches by 6 inches, with a depth of 8 inches—plenty of room for a hand. If that doesn't help, try to get a look at the picture in the equipment section of the Core Rules CD-ROM.

Is it possible for a nymph to fall in love, say, with a Ranger who has a great Charisma?

What, exactly, does a vampire or another undead level-drainer do with the energy it drains?

Level-draining undead don't actually do anything with the life energy they drain; the energy is siphoned off to the Negative Material Plane and annihilated.

I have a player who insists on having his character cast the *call lightning* spell while within an *obscurement* spell that the character has also cast. Since *obscurement* creates fog and fog is mostly water, I have ruled that the *call lightning* spell electrifies the whole cloud. This has created quite a struggle. Any comments?

Yes, three comments.

First, while clouds contain a lot of water, they're still air, at least insofar as their effects on magic use in the AD&D game are concerned.

Second, one must have a storm overhead to cast *call lightning*, not just a cloud. Magical whirlwinds, such as those djinn produce, count as storms; but cloud effects, such as *obscurement, wall of fog, stinking cloud,* and *cloudkill* do not.

Third, *call lighting* does not work underwater; if the bolt from a *call lightning* spell strikes a body of water, it has its normal area of effect above the surface, a cylinder with a radius of 10 feet, and creates a hemisphere with a 10' radius below the surface. It does not electrify the whole body of water.

Is it possible for a nymph to fall in love, say, with a Ranger who has a great Charisma? Could such a couple have children? What powers would such children have?

I suppose it's possible for a nymph to fall in love with a character, but it's not likely as nymphs tend to prefer solitude. It is certainly possible for nymphs to bear children. Treat a nymph's male offspring as any other member of the father's race (though perhaps with a bonus to Charisma). A nymph's female offspring will always be a nymph no matter what the father's race.

What can I do to improve my skill and vocabulary in Olde English?

Read Chaucer, in particular, the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer actually wrote in Middle English, but that seems to be the effect for which you are actually striving.

Judging from "Sage Advice" in issue #248, in which you say that it is not possible for a character to catch arrows, I would venture to say that you have never met my friend [name deleted]. My friend has a scar on the palm of his right hand, which he got from catching an arrow through his hand. Now, even he admits that he missed the arrow more times then he caught it, and he was not the only person he knows who has a similar scar somewhere on the body, but the simple fact exists that it is possible to catch an arrow. Simply telling that guy, "No, juggling doesn't allow a character to catch arrows," gives him no assistance in DMing or playing. Considering the amount of weight that your rulings have with many DMs and players, you have killed a lot of daring arrow-catching attempts, with their equally spectacular failures.

You are correct; I have not met your friend. In fact, I have never met anyone who has made a hobby of trying to catch arrows, though several individuals of my acquaintance are probably foolish enough to try it, given suitable encouragement. Let's hope you and they never meet.

I'll point out here that the column in issue #248 said nothing at all about arrow catching in general, just arrow catching with regard to the the fairly common Juggling proficiency. (Just a reminder: arrow catching is not a function of the Juggling proficiency.) Rest assured that I am very much aware how influential this column can be, hence my haste to squash the notion that for a measly one-slot proficiency (two slots for non-Thieves) PCs can run around snatching arrows out of the air like actors in a bad martial arts flick. As for any chilling effect issue #248's column had on arrow-catching in the AD&D game, you can also rest assured that "Sage Advice" has hardly ever prevented player characters from taking harebrained risks. Such ideas have an irresistible momentum that not even this column can bring to a halt.

In any case, if any DM wants to create a Catch Arrow skill, that's okay by me; I suggest making the skill's function inversely proportional to the character's Wisdom score.

Should a PC ever really need to catch an arrow, it's ok to allow a one-shot attempt (really). Judging from your description of your friend's scars, I'd venture to suggest that this would not so much involve catching the arrow (in the same sense as catching a baseball) as deciding exactly where the arrow will hit—sort of a reversed called shot. Since the "catcher" is putting herself in harm's way, I'd have that character attempt saving throw vs. breath weapon, adjusted for Dexterity. (It's fine to give jugglers a bonus to the this saving throw.) If the save fails, the character is hit by the arrow, no matter what the attack roll was. (That's the penalty for stepping into harm's way.) If the saving throw succeeds, the character takes the arrow through the hand (or other appendage), provided the attack roll was good enough to hit the character. If the attack roll missed and the saving throw succeeds, the character catches the arrow, ta da!

Skip Williams cryptically notes that this month's final question brings the words "mask of valor" to mind. Skip was uncharacteristically uncommunicative when pressed for details.

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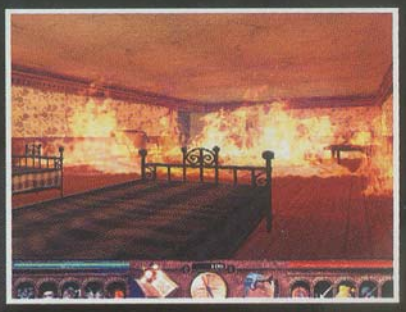

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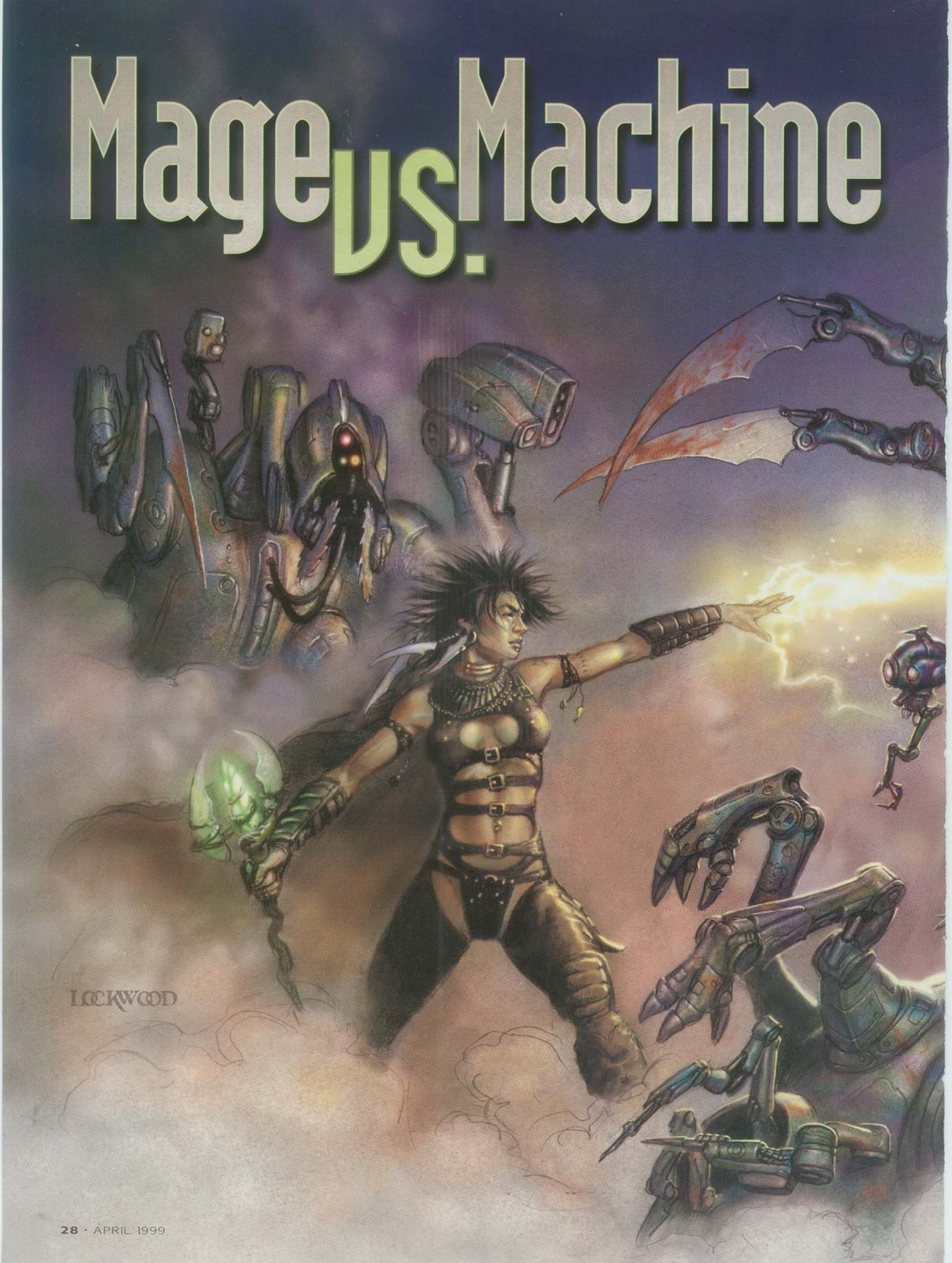
Mage vs. Machine



by Bruce R. Cordell

illustrated by Todd Lockwood

Binary tones wash over the mountainside, so briefly that untrained ears hear only static. Pulses of red light paint arcane symbols across the cliff face. The insect drone grows stronger, but the source remains unseen.

The giants of the nearby pass murmur among themselves, while rumor of the event passes from goblin mouth to goblin ear across a hundred miles. Eventually, the rumor reaches the Vital League. They immediately dispatch a Sheenchaser, hoping to arrive on the scene before their rivals, the Machine Coalition. The signs are clear to those who know: A machine cyst grows unchecked in the wilderness!

The "creatures" of the machine cysts neither breathe nor bleed. Some sages liken them to iron insects, metallic fiends, or free-willed golems.

The Wizards of the Vital League aspire to the utter eradication of machine cysts. They train special Mages, Sheenchasers, in the arts of detecting, tracking, and ultimately eliminating free-roaming machines that have learned the trick of self-replication.

Their opponents are the Machine Mages, spellcasters who welcome machine life and seek to exploit the "technology" of these self-replicating sheens. Machine Mages form the Machine Coalition, a splinter of the original Vital League.

Living Machines

With infinite Prime Planes and the means to traverse them, elements of one Plane sometimes infect another. On many Planes, clockwork lore advanced well beyond iron springs and gears. Constructs that unlock energy from matter and sunlight were developed as tools on some Planes. The lore of the machine builders is vast, and some of their mechanisms serve as remote servants for mighty exploratory vessels.

Some of these vessels foundered in the tide pools of the universe, "sinking" on planes where technology is subservient to magic. In some cases, the living crew and their machine servants survived the catastrophe; in others, only the machines survived. A few damaged but functioning machines—without the guidance of their living masters—bypassed safeguards and mimicked life, replicating themselves to insure survival.

In every case of unsupervised machine cyst formation documented by the Vital League, self-replicating machines are inimicable to the ecosystem because their single goal is their own expansion—at the expense of local resources. Machine life regards living creatures as dispensable and easily eradicated competitors.

Even more frightening is a truncated report describing biological masters of the machines. Apparently, they are Wizards who long ago embraced both magic and technology. The goals of these "sheenmasters" are a source of much debate within League and Coalition circles, but they remain enigmas.

An Abridged Apparatiary

To catalogue the reported incidents of machine life, the Vital League has created a machine bestiary or--as they call it—the *Apparatiary.* The *Apparatiary* is updated as Sheenchasers discover new cysts from different origins.

At least two points of origin for machine life cysts are currently known, the Barrier Peaks and the Rael cysts. Many more are suspected to exist, but they are as yet undiscovered. Each of the confirmed sites includes several different types of free-roaming machines. Worse, it's not uncommon for each machine type to modify itself and its "progeny" to become better equipped to deal with their environment.

There are currently over one hundred entries in the *Apparatiary,* but this record relates only the four most common forms of machine life encountered by Sheenchasers. These are the forms that most often leave the cyst to probe for new resources. As yet, no Sheenchaser has found and entered a machine cyst and returned to tell the tale.

Walkers

Walkers number among the simplest sheens observed outside a machine cyst. A walker's body is composed mostly of a lumpy metallic obloid. Dim lights flicker across the surface of the sphere in different patterns, depending on the walker's situation. The main body is supported by two slender metal legs, each ending in a wide, hooflike iron pad. Another limb, called a sampler arm, emerges from beneath the sphere. The sampler arm contains small metal teeth, perfect for gripping samples but also useful in defending the walker from threats it can't escape.

The Vital League believes that walkers serve as advance scouts for an expanding machine cyst. Cysts require a specialized mix of resources, which walkers are suited to locate. When a walker finds the appropriate mineral and environmental conditions, it returns to its cyst with the report. Teams of up to six walkers usually work together.

Walkers must return to their machine cyst once per month to replenish their energy. If a walker's energy is depleted and not replenished, it becomes inert. Sheenchasers have had some success in "recharging" walkers with finely focused *shocking grasp* spells, then following the walker back to its home cyst.

Note: Stronger variants of the walker have been sighted. Additionally, walkers specialized for ore recovery (called miners) are common in areas rich in the mineral resources sought by a growing cyst. Miner sheens possess digger arms instead of sampler arms, as well as a "plasma shovel" in the form of a focused plasma burst that can unearth soil and stone quickly. The plasma shovel can also be directed at organic nuisances. (Variant statistics appear with the standard walker stats.)

Walker, machine life form (1d6): AC 6 (metallic foil); MV 9; HD 1+1; hp 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (sampler arm); SA Electrical discharge; SD Grade 1 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW Magic susceptibility; SZ S (3' diameter); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 175; Str 9, Dex 9, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 5, Cha 0.

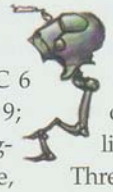
SA—Electrical discharge. Walkers store electrical energy in their outer carapace. Up to three times per day, a walker can release this energy as a powerful electrical shock. When a walker does so, the next foe struck in melee with the sampler arm suffers an additional 2d4 points of electrical damage in addition to physical damage. Alternatively, if an attacker strikes the walker with a metallic weapon while the walker contains an excess charge in its carapace, the foe also receives 2d4 points of electrical damage. Each excess electrical build-up depletes the walker's energy stores, forcing it to return to its cyst one day sooner than it otherwise would to replenish its energy.

SD—Grade 1 defensive field. Walkers automatically generate a physical protective field from virtual particles. Though generally invisible, the defensive field drains 1 point of damage from every successful attack directed at the walker, to a maximum of 6 hit points/day. For example, a longsword that would inflict 3 points of damage actually inflicts only 2 points of damage on the walker, while depleting the defensive

field by 1 point. (The field can absorb only 5 more hit points that day, 1 hit point at a time.) Magical attacks that deliver direct damage, such as *fireball, lightning bolt,* etc., are also affected by the defensive field, but only *after* respective saving throws are made (see Magic Susceptibility).

SW—Magic Susceptibility. All forms of machine life are unsuited to resist magic, except for mind-affecting magic. (Machine "minds" work differently from organic minds.) Walkers save against all spells with a –3 penalty. Against spells that cause physical harm, sheens always suffer one additional point of damage per die of damage delivered. Thus, a 6d6 *fireball* affects a sheen as a 6d6 + 6 *fireball.*

Walker, Strong Variant: AC 0 (reinforced metallic foil + Dex); MV 12; HD 4+1; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (sampler arm/sampler arm); SA Electrical discharge; SD Grade 1 defensive field; SW Magic susceptibility; SZ M (4' diameter); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 975; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 5, Cha 0.



Ore Recovery Walker (Miner): AC 6 (metallic foil); MV 9; HD 1+1; hp 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 1; Dmg 1d6 (digger arm); SA Electrical discharge, plasma shovel; SD Grade 1 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW Magic susceptibility; SZ S (3' diameter); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 420; Str 9, Dex 9, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 5, Cha 0.

SA—Plasma Shovel. Three times per day, the miner can vent superheated plasma from the tip of its digger arm. The plasma is a searing cone of superheated particles (although the orientation is the opposite of the cone of plasma "breath" of a render) 30 feet long, 3 feet wide at the origin and gradually narrowing to an inch or less at the terminus. Soil and earth melts away from the skilled touch of the plasma shovel, revealing the minerals sought by miners. Creatures struck by the plasma must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer 4d10 points of damage; creatures that successfully save still suffer half damage. Treat the plasma as fire for purposes of invulnerabilites and protective magics.

Drifters

Drifters float like carnival balloons, though heated air doesn't seem to come into play (for that matter, neither do spells of *flying* or *levitation*, nor does *telekinesis* seem to be responsible for lift). A drifter's body is composed mostly of a lumpy metallic ovoid 4 feet long and 3 feet broad. Three metal limbs, called sampler arms, hang from the bottom of the shiny egg. Like walkers, a drifter's sampler arms are good both for taking stock of the environment and defending themselves from harm.

Machine "Healing"

All forms of machine life possess self-repair subroutines. Thus, a machine left for dead might eventually repair itself. Sheens effect internal repairs at a rate of 1d4 hit points per twenty-four hours. Moreover, sheens continue to effect repairs even when brought below 0 hit points. Self-repair subroutines are scrambled if a sheen is brought below –10 hit points, at which time it is truly "dead."

Drifters are like walkers in that they fulfill a similar function for the machine cyst. However, in addition to providing leads toward replenishing dwindling resources, Drifters are also important to an existing machine cyst's defensive perimeter. Generally, several drifters are always deployed within 1d4 miles of a machine cyst. Via an invisible and not yet understood means of communication, drifters can signal a machine cyst when potential

Glossary

Apparatiary: A collection of stories, descriptions, and statistics covering all the varieties of machine life identified by the League.

Arm, digger: A mechanical limb used by miners for excavation but also useful for attack and defense.

Manipulator: A mechanical limb used by flitters for handling objects and interacting with the environment; also useful for attack and defense.

Sampler: A mechanical limb used by many sheens for procuring small samples of resources; also useful for attack and defense.

Capacitor: All sheens possess circuit elements capable of temporarily storing an electric charge. Some sheens can build an excess charge for attack and defense.

Cyst: See Machine Cyst.

Defensive Field: Many sheens can erect invisible force fields that are capable of absorbing a fraction of damage from kinetic and energetic attacks.

Machine: See Sheen.

Machine Cyst: Any "base of operations" for a community of related sheens. Cysts are assumed to contain some sort of Overseer sheen which provides direction and programming for all the sheens of the community.

Machine Life: A philosophical term indicating free-roving and self-replicating machines.

Machine Mage: A Wizard trained in the art of exploiting the particular "technology" inherent in all machine life.

Plasma: A supremely ionized gas so energetic that it is used by some machines for excavation and offensive purposes.

Sheen: An all-inclusive term describing any specimen of machine life.

Sheenchaser: A Wizard trained in the art of tracking and destroying machine life.

Sheenmasters: Mythical biological masters, rumored to reside offplane, who control the actions of certain machine cysts.

organic intruders trespass. Until reinforcements are mustered, drifters can serve as the first line of defense.

Unlike walkers, drifters can replenish their energy stores through simple exposure to the sun.

Smaller varieties of the drifter are called flitters for their quicker movement. Flitters often serve as "familiars" for machine mages. The flitter can actually project its excess electrical charge in the form of a small electrical bolt, but it possesses only a single manipulator arm.

Drifter, machine life form (1d4): AC 6 (metallic foil); MV 0, Fl 12 (A); HD 3+1; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6 (sampler arm); SA Electrical discharge; SD Grade 2 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW Magic susceptibility; SZ M (4' long); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 650; Str 10; Dex 10; Con 16; Int 6; Wis 5; Cha 0

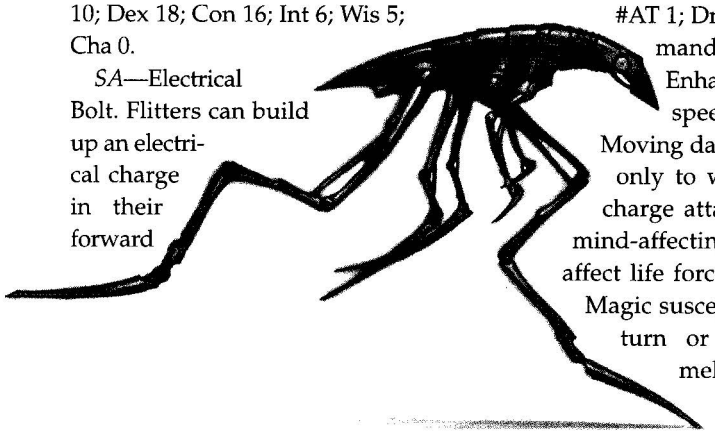
SA—Electrical Discharge. See similar SA for walker; drifters can use this ability 5/day. Furthermore, usage does not deplete a drifter's energy stores.

SD—Grade 2 defensive field. See similar SD for walker; drifter defensive fields drain 2 points of damage per physical attack, to a maximum of 12 points of damage per day.

SW—Magic susceptibility. See similar SW for walker.

Flitter, machine life form (1d4): AC 2 (metallic foil + Dex); MV 0, Fl 20 (A); HD 3+1; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (manipulator arm); SA Electrical bolt; SD Grade 2 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW Magic susceptibility; SZ M (4' long); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 975; Str 10; Dex 18; Con 16; Int 6; Wis 5; Cha 0.

SA—Electrical Bolt. Flitters can build up an electrical charge in their forward sensor array 3/day. Unlike other sheens, the flitter can project an excess electrical charge at any target within 30 feet for 3d4 points of electrical damage. Victims who make a successful saving throw vs. spells suffer only half damage.



Dashers

Dashers are generally noted only by the effects of their speedy passage: a wind, a trail of sparks over stones, and a hail of small debris swept up in the dasher's wake. A dasher moves at less than full speed only if damaged. Still, Sheen-chasers have trapped dashers and noted their basic shape before meltdown (see SW); a dasher resembles a nightmarishly elongated iron mantis, complete with six spindly legs used only for running at insane speeds; it falls over if slowed to less than 30 mph.

Dashers are the reason machine cysts are usually found on open ground. Although dashers can clear barriers less than 20 feet high with a single stride, the speedy machines can't turn well. Foes who take shelter inside a solid structure (tents don't count), are backed up against a wall, or who throw themselves flat upon the ground are immune to the blindingly swift attack of a dasher. The only possible attack against a moving dasher is to set a weapon against a charge. (A dasher's attacks are all charges.) Targeting a spell is almost impossible, although *wall* spells and other area effects can be quite effective.

A dasher expends an extraordinary amount of energy and must return to the machine cyst daily to replenish its energy stores. If it fails to do so, it slows to a standstill, tips over, and lies inactive.

Dasher, machine life form (1): AC –3 (reinforced metallic foil plus speed); MV Special; HD 3+1; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d20 (high speed mandible slash); SA Enhanced damage due to speed, sonic boom; SD Moving dashers are susceptible only to weapons set against charge attacks, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW Magic susceptibility, inability to turn or corner effectively, meltdown; SZ M (6' long); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 1,400; Str 15; Dex 20; Con 16; Int 6; Wis 5; Cha 0.

SA—Speed. A dasher's metallic mandible inflicts 1d20 points of damage per attack when delivered in conjunction with its high speed.

SA—Sonic boom. Once per day, a dasher can generate a sonic boom by accelerating to its top speed. A dasher's sonic boom affects all living creatures within a 100'-radius of the effect. All creatures in the area of effect must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation. Those that successfully save fall to the ground. Those that fail fall to the ground and suffer 1d4 points of damage.

SD—Speed. Non-augmented foes can attack a dasher only by setting a weapon for the dasher's charge. A *haste* spell allows a foe to attack a dasher at the end of the round with a –2 penalty to hit, just before the dasher runs out of attack range for melee weapons. *Hasted* foes using missile weapons roll initiative normally but still attack with a –2 attack penalty.

SW—Speed. Foes can drop flat, stand against a solid wall or embankment, or enter a solid structure to avoid a dasher's attacks, due to its inability to turn or corner without a great turning radius.

SW—Magic Susceptibility. See similar SW for Walkers.

SW—Meltdown. A huge charge of energy is necessary to power a dasher's constant motion. This same speed is responsible for cooling the dasher's carapace. If somehow stopped, either by damage or the cunning use of traps and spells, the dasher retains the heat that is a byproduct of its energy storage. Over 3 rounds, and accompanied by a cherry-red glow, the dasher melts into a pool of slag, utterly destroyed.

Renders

These terrible machines resemble monstrously swollen insects, complete with dozens of writhing metallic legs, feelers, and lethal projections good only for cutting and ripping. As if these weren't enough, renders possess strange orifices from which they vent destructive energies at distant targets. Few Sheen-chasers have encountered renders and lived, so few visual references exist. The

best is a famous painting hanging in the Vital League's Motherhouse depicting the conflict between a render and Abele, the founder of the League.

The render fulfills only one need for the machine cyst: defense. The machine has "evolved" to incapacitate and destroy organic life, and it is good at what it does. Most machine cysts contain only one or two specimens, but that's usually enough. Sheenchasers who come upon renders are in for the fight of their lives.

Renders are sometimes sent on long-term missions by the controlling mind of the machine cyst, usually to deter groups on the verge of finding the machine cyst. Thus, renders contain an internal energy source good for several years of activity, at minimum. All Sheenchasers are taught to respect this arcane energy source, and to leave it well alone if they should ever manage to vanquish a render in combat.

Render, machine life form (1): AC –6 (steel scales); MV 12; HD 16+1; hp 144; THAC0 5; #AT 7; Dmg 1d10/1d10/1d10/1d10/1d10/1d10/3d10 (blade arms × 6, rotating blade "mandibles"); SA Plasma "breath," electrical discharge; SD Grade 3 defensive field, immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and psionics; SW Magic susceptibility; SZ H (10' diameter); ML Fearless (20); AL N; XP 19,000; Str 22; Dex 18; Con 22; Int 10; Wis 10; Cha 0.

SA—Plasma "breath." Three times per day, the render can vent superheated plasma from an anterior valve, creating a searing cone of superheated particles 90 feet long, 5 feet wide at the origin, and 30 feet wide at the terminus. Creatures struck by the plasma must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer 16d10 points of damage; creatures that successfully save still suffer half damage. Treat the plasma as fire for purposes of invulnerabilites and protective magics.

SA—Electrical Discharge. See similar SA for walker; renders can use this ability 5/day without depleting a render's energy.

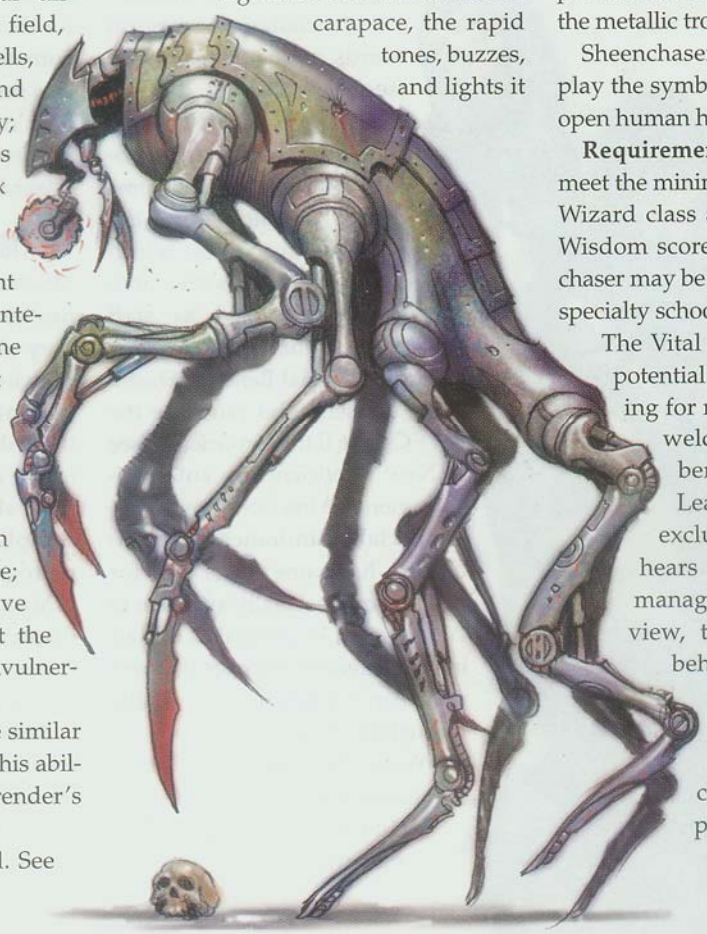
SD—Grade 3 defensive field. See similar SD for walker; defensive fields drain 3 hit points per physical attack. The render's self-contained energy source allows the field to remain up continuously without recharge.

SW—Magic Susceptibility. Machine life is unsuited to resist magic. Renders make all saving throws vs. magic with a –2 penalty. In every other regard, treat a render's magic susceptibility as described under the walker SW.

Founding the Vital League

The Vital League was founded after a single incident thirty years ago. Eight-year-old Abele apprenticed under Macurby the Old, an able and knowledgeable Wizard living on the frontier. Abele came to regard Macurby as the father she'd never had, and though the discipline came hard to her, she continued to learn of all things magical to please her mentor.

During one of his field expeditions, Macurby came upon an exceptionally strange creature. At first he thought it was an insect, then perhaps an experimental golem escaped from its master. Capturing it, he brought the thing back to his domicile to study the strange lights that blinked across its carapace, the rapid tones, buzzes, and lights it emitted, and its constant beeping. Macurby had found what the Vital League today calls a walker.



In a fashion undetected by Macurby, the walker contacted its machine "brethren," who descended upon Macurby's isolated home in the night. Macurby fell under the attack of a many-legged metal demon now called a render. Through the battle, and long afterward, Abele took shelter in the cellar, watching the attack through a *magic mirror.* In horror, she saw her mentor die. She watched the machines gather their own fallen and depart. In a growing rage, she dedicated herself to the extermination of machine life everywhere. Abele eventually founded the Vital League and developed the spells and skills now taught to all League exterminators, the Sheenchasers.

The Sheenchaser Kit

Sheenchasers are charged with the destruction of machine life. They are driven or even obsessed with locating signs of machine infestation. Sheenchasers know that even the slightest sign can hide a thriving and expanding machine cyst. Most bear the scars of past encounters, and some few possess the metallic trophies of sheens defeated.

Sheenchasers generally wear or display the symbol of the Vital League: an open human hand.

Requirements: A Sheenchaser must meet the minimum requirements for the Wizard class and must also possess a Wisdom score of at least 13. A Sheenchaser may be specialized, as long as the specialty school is not barred by the kit.

The Vital League, which trains all potential Sheenchasers, cares nothing for race or gender; anyone is welcome to apply for membership. Of course, the League is quasi-secret and exclusive. Even if a Wizard hears about the League and manages to arrange an interview, the Vital League is not beholden to accept the Wizard character for training.

If a character is accepted for training, the character is secluded for a period of six months of intensive study, followed

by periodic seminars over the course of his career. Generally speaking, the League expects those it trains to be devoted for life. The skills, once learned, cannot be unlearned, nor are the special glyphs and tattoos used by the League easily erased. In fact, the League actively seeks out Sheenchasers who've failed to check in periodically (at least once per year). A special quest (to destroy a given machine cyst, usually) is given to the lax Sheenchaser. Those who are unable to perform the quest, for whatever reason, are viewed with deep suspicion by the guild. Rumors abound of Sheenchasers who have been somehow "compromised" by machine life, and those who do not or can not perform the duties of a Sheenchaser are in danger of being viewed in the poorest possible light and eventually eliminated.

Role: Sheenchasers sometimes form teams when a central cyst is finally located. In most other circumstances, Sheenchasers work apart from other Sheenchasers to spread the net of their influence as widely as possible. This doesn't prevent a Sheenchaser from joining a company of adventurers. In fact, such associations are often preferred for the protection they offer and the travel opportunities provided.

Preferred Schools: None.

Barred Schools: Necromancy, Enchantment/Charm, and Illusion.

Secondary Skills: If secondary skills are used in the campaign, a Sheenchaser should have the Hunter skill.

Weapon Proficiencies: Sheenchasers can choose any weapon appropriate to the Wizard class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Detect Fumes, Delude Sensors (see New Proficiencies). *Recommended:* Navigation, Tracking, Circuit Tattoo.

Equipment: At the DM's option, a Sheenchaser may start the game in possession of or access to one of the new items described under Arcana.

Spell Selection: At the DM's option, the Sheenchaser may begin with 1d4 +1 new spells listed under New Spells.

Distinctive Appearance: At first glance, Sheenchasers resemble traveling Wizards. Few students of the lore wear robes, preferring leggings and clothing that won't hamper rapid movement. In addition, most Sheenchasers sport at least one or two special tattoos that both proclaim their affiliation with other Sheenchasers and sometimes contain magical wards against machine life (see New Spells). Finally, Sheenchasers who have had any luck at all in their chosen profession usually possess trophies from defeated machines, which are sometimes sewn into vests, affixed as staff heads, or worn as jewelry.

Special Benefits: Sheenchasers who purchase the Circuit Tattoo proficiency (see New Proficiencies) automatically gain one free bonus rank.

Special Hindrances: Sheenchasers have one fewer slot for proficiencies normally available to Wizards. If a Wizard takes this kit in mid career, he forgoes the next nonweapon proficiency available through level progression.

Wealth Options: The Sheenchaser receives the standard (1d4 + 1) × 10 gp starting money.

Founding the Machine Coalition

The Vital League developed proficiencies and spells specifically to eradicate machine life. Recently, a group of Sheenchasers proposed that the technology of the machines could be used as weaponry with some study. Much debate and internal conflict followed. In the end, a group of Wizards broke from the League and formed its own group, the Machine Coalition. The Coalition trains Wizards similarly to Sheenchasers but focuses on using machines instead of destroying them. Wizards who belong to the Coalition can take the Machine Mage kit. All the proficiencies available to Sheenchasers are also available to Machine Mages; however, Machine Mages salvage sheens for their own purposes rather than simply destroying them.

Machine Mages, not surprisingly, do not get on well with Sheenchasers. Coalition members view the League as short-sighted alarmists, blindly destroying an invaluable resource. On the other hand, the League sees the Coalition as betrayers of all biological life. Thus, it is not uncommon for conflict to erupt between the members of each group. Since both seek machine cysts for their own reasons, they often meet. Sometimes, Wizards of one organization seek members of the other. If tempers continue to escalate, it is only a matter of time before a full-scale war of Wizards ensues.

The Machine Mage Kit

Machine Mages do not believe that machine life is inherently evil. Though they share many of the same proficiencies and spells with Sheenchasers, they aim to exploit machines rather than destroy them. Machine Mages must, of course, defend themselves from sheens, which are anything but compliant to being salvaged and reprogrammed.

Machine Mages generally wear or display the symbol of the Machine Coalition: a human-shaped hand consisting only of machine parts.

Requirements: A Machine Mage must meet the minimum requirements for the Wizard class and must also possess a Wisdom score of at least 13. A Machine Mage may be specialized, as

long as the school of specialty is not a barred school.

Because the Coalition is a small splinter group, its training regimen is not nearly as strict as the League's. In fact, being a Machine Mage really just requires an attitude shift from that of a standard Sheenchaser and studied application of said attitude shift towards the utilization of machines instead of the destruction of machines. Thus, a Wizard doesn't even need to be a member of the Coalition to be a Machine Mage. However, the intensive training of the League (or some Coalition variant) is still necessary, even if all the tenants of the League are not embraced.

Role: The Machine Coalition is a splinter organization from its larger and more powerful parent organization, the Vital League. In fact, League Wizards often come to blows with Coalition Mages, seeing Machine Mage craft as a perversion of sacred training. A Sheenchaser wouldn't think twice about destroying a Machine Mage's "familiars" if given the chance.

Preferred Schools: None.

Barred Schools: Necromancy, Enchantment/Charm, and Illusion.

Secondary Skills: If secondary skills are used in the campaign, a Machine Mage should have the Smith skill.

Weapon Proficiencies: Machine mages can choose any weapon appropriate to the Wizard class. *Bonus:* Salvage, Artifice (see New Proficiencies). *Recommended:* Blacksmithing, Machine Language, Digital Persuasion (see New Proficiencies).

Equipment: The Machine Mage begins the game in possession of a tiny hands kit and either a capacitor staff or a sensor belt, at the DM's option.

Spell Selection: At the DM's option, the Machine Mage begins with 1d4 + 1 new spells listed under New Spells.

Distinctive Appearance: Machine Mages always stand out due to their use of salvaged machine technology. Unless in hiding from Sheenchasers, Machine Mages are often followed about by small mechanical familiars that have been cobbled together using the Mage's special skills (the Artifice proficiency). Additionally, it's not uncommon to encounter Machine Mages with buzzing, humming, or beeping metallic boxes worn on their belts or backs.

Special Benefits: Machine Mages start the game with either a standard walker or a flitter (a drifter variant) that has been reprogrammed through Digital Persuasion or completely cobbled together from spare parts using the Artifice proficiency. This companion sheen serves as the Machine Mage's familiar. Additionally, the sheen familiar proves an ideal subject for ongoing "innovations" through which the Machine Mage can hone his knowledge of machine arcana.

Special Hindrances: Machine Mages cannot have a normal familiar. If a normal familiar already exists when this kit is taken, the familiar leaves within one month because of neglect. The affected Machine Mage suffers all associated penalties with losing a familiar.

Wealth Options: The Sheenchaser receives the standard (1d4 + 1) × 10 gp starting money.

New Proficiencies

The nonweapon proficiencies introduced below are available to Sheenchasers and Machine Mages; they are not normally available to characters who are not members of the Vital League or the Machine Coalition. It's possible, however, that a Sheenchaser or Machine Mage could teach some of the proficiencies (but not Circuit Tattoo or Salvage), but the Vital League frowns upon teaching outside of the fold.

Artifice

Artifice allows a Machine Mage to repair or cobble together working machines from pre-existing parts, "improve" the capabilities of extant machines (if the requisite material is on hand), and incorporate salvaged machine modules into unique items.

At the most elementary level, Artifice allows a Wizard with this proficiency to reactivate a "dead" sheen with a successful proficiency check. Use the Salvage proficiency's deactivation chart for modifiers to the base check based on the method used to deactivate the sheen. Often, the parts of two or more sheens must be used to cobble together a single working unit. (The rule of thumb: If a sheen was brought to –20 hp or below, its remaining parts are not sufficient for repair; additional sheen parts from another machine must be provided.) On a successful check, the sheen regains basic functionality, although it still suffers a –2 penalty on all actions due to its previous incapacity. With the application of Digital Persuasion prior to bringing the repaired sheen back online, the Machine Mage might have made a new friend.

Another aspect of Artifice is the Machine Mage's ability to improve the capabilities of a functioning sheen or to create new ones.

The possibilities for the sheen include heightened Intelligence, an ability to trigger preset spells, and heightened damage and defensive capabilities.

Every time the Machine Mage increases a level, he can roll both requisite proficiency checks on a captured sheen. If successful in both, he can pick a category listed above or suggest a new one to the DM. With the DM's approval, the indicated capacity is gained or heightened. The DM must exercise extreme care to make sure that this benefit doesn't become overbalancing. The general guidelines for a heightened ability score or damage potential is 1d4 points. New abilities that inflict damage should similarly start low and gain increased effectiveness only with successive levels and successful checks by the Machine Mage.

Circuit Tattoo

This proficiency allows a Wizard to imprint a personal circuit tattoo that can store machine-specific spells (see New Spells) for later use. Such tattoos look quite alien to those versed in the arcana of magic symbology, but to those who understand machine logic, circuit tattoos are germane. Note that only machine-specific spells can be stored in circuit tattoos because the machine spells were created with the foreknowledge that they must be configured to this proficiency. All other spells are unsuitable for storage in circuit tattoos.

A Wizard with this proficiency must spend 1d4 + 2 hours with the requisite dyes and needles to imprint a circuit tattoo on a portion of skin. A steady

New Proficiencies

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Modifier
Artifice	2	Wisdom	–3
Circuit tattoo	1	Intelligence	–3
Detect Fumes	1	Wisdom	–4/–1
Delude Sensors	2	Wisdom	–2
Digital Persuasion	2/1	Intelligence	–4
Machine Language	1	Wisdom	–2
Salvage	2	Intelligence	–6

hand determines the quality of the tattoo, but a Circuit Tattoo proficiency check is required to determine whether the tattoo is properly crafted to hold a machine-specific spell. If the tattoo is of proper quality, the Wizard must then cast the appropriate spell into the tattoo, according to the guidelines presented below.

A single rank (1 slot) in Circuit Tattoo allows the Wizard to draw only a single special tattoo on his body, and said tattoo can hold only a 1st-level machine-specific spell. Each additional rank allows the Wizard either to draw another tattoo and store another 1st-level machine spell or else to enhance a rank 1 tattoo, so it can hold 1st-or 2nd-level machine spells. Each additional rank of Circuit Tattoo allows the Wizard the same choice. Thus, someone with 6 ranks of Circuit Tattoo might have a single tattoo capable of holding one 1st- to 6th-level spell. Alternatively, the Wizard might have three tattoos, each capable of holding one 1st- or 2nd-level machine-specific spell, or six tattoos, each capable of holding one 1st-level spell.

Any spell cast into the tattoo remains until triggered by the Wizard. When the spell is triggered, the Wizard indicates target, range, and other parameters just as if normally casting the spell; but the spell is treated as if cast at the level at which it was originally stored in the tattoo. The tattoo itself remains on the Wizard and can be recharged with a machine-specific spell of the appropriate level.

Delude Sensors

This proficiency is somewhat related to the Herbalism proficiency and allows the chaser to identify plants and fungi, as well as clays, sands, and specific minerals. The proper ingredients, gathered from natural sources, allow the Sheenchaser to concoct a special salve that can fool the sensors and optical scanners used by machine lifeforms.

Using this proficiency requires two checks. The first check is made after spending 1d4 hours foraging in an attempt to find the requisite ingredients. If successful, the proper ingredients are procured to create 1d4 + 2 doses of the salve. The collected ingredients and the prepared salve both go bad after one week + 1d4 days of storage. To be effective, one dose of the salve must be applied in a thin layer upon the clothing, armor, hair, and bare skin. Once applied, the salve remains effective for twenty-four hours.

The second check is required whenever anyone wearing the salve comes into contact with machine life. If the check is successful, the machine ignores the salved figure as if invisible. If the check fails, the machine identifies the salved figure but suffers a –2 penalty on all actions in conjunction with the protected figure, including attack rolls and saving throws.

If a successfully salved figure attacks a sheen that was previously ignoring it, the invisibility effect fades, although the machine suffers a –2 penalty on all actions associated with dealing with the salved figure as described above.

Detect Fumes

Detect Fumes permits a chance to detect subtle scents—a whiff of oil, the trace of rubber, and the acrid scent of electricity—that indicate the presence of machine life within 200 feet. In conjunction with the Detect Fumes proficiency, a Wizard with the Tracking proficiency ignores the non-Ranger penalty when following a machine. Attempts to track anything other than a machine incur the standard non-Ranger penalty.

Digital Persuasion Results Table

1d4	Result
1	Sheen returns directly to cyst with false sampling data.
2	Sheen returns directly to cyst and never leaves again.
3	Sheen reacts toward reprogrammer as if *charmed* for 1d6 + 6 days but does not attack other sheens.
4	Sheen reacts toward reprogrammer as if *charmed* for 1d6 + 6 days and attacks other sheens on sight.
5	Sheen reacts toward reprogrammer as if permanently *charmed*, but it does not attack other sheens.
6	Sheen reacts toward reprogrammer as if permanently *charmed* and attacks other sheens if so instructed.

This proficiency functions passively as well as actively. Whenever a Wizard moves within 200 feet of a sheen, the DM secretly rolls a check at the –4 modifier. If successful, the Sheenchaser becomes aware of nearby machine activity. Note that direction and distance are not disclosed. If the passive check is failed, the DM does not roll again for a minimum of one hour, or until some obvious clue of machine life activity is presented.

A Wizard can also choose to sniff for machine life actively (no more than once per hour). The conscious check requires 3 rounds to accomplish but has only a –1 modifier to the ability check.

Digital Persuasion

This proficiency gives the Wizard a crude ability to selectively short-circuit the intelligence chip of a machine life form. This proficiency can never be used on an active sheen; it is applicable only to a disabled machine (a machine brought to below 0 hit points).

A Wizard with this proficiency must spend 1d4 + 2 turns attempting to affect a disabled sheen, at the end of which time the proficiency check is rolled. If successful, the sheen's base programming has become altered in some fashion (see below). The results of the program change take effect when the

sheen's self-repair subroutines naturally bring it to positive hit points. If the check fails, the Wizard has permanently scrambled the sheen's AI chip—the self-repair mechanism is also disabled, permanently "killing" the sheen.

Successful proficiency checks indicate some change in the base programming, as shown on the Digital Persuasion Results Table. Note that each additional rank of this skill only costs one slot, and with each additional rank, the chaser can modify the result on the table below by +1/–1. Thus results 5 and 6 can be obtained only by someone with an additional 1 or 2 ranks in this skill. (Alternatively, someone with one slot of Machine Language can also modify the roll on the results table by +1/–1.)

Machine Language

This proficiency gives the Sheenchaser A crude understanding of the bursts of sound and light that machine life uses during line-of-sight communication with other machines.

The proficiency can be checked whenever a machine life form is observed to be making buzzes and static-like tones or emitting light pulses. If the check is successful, the chaser gains a general understanding of what the sheen is currently "saying."

Usually, a sheen that is signaling is providing a running commentary on what it sees in its environment and what its short term plans are in response to its environment. Thus, a sheen might be understood to say, "rough ground ahead predominated by mineral protrusions must navigate to the right 30 degrees organic woody protrusion to the left must investigate ambulatory organisms straight ahead ... must eliminate." This proficiency becomes more useful if two Sheens are observed communicating with each other, especially if specific information concerning the machine cyst expansion and deployment of sheens in the field is "discussed."

Note that one slot of Machine Language proficiency suffices to modify a successful Digital Persuasion results table roll by +1/–1.

Salvage Modifiers Table

Deactivated Primarily Through:

Melee	–1
Spells, intrusive	–2
Spells, nonintrusive	+3

Melee Damage includes all damage from swords, axes, stones, etc. **Intrusive spells** include all spells that inflict damage directly by channeling energy, such as *lightning bolt, fireball*, cold, acid, etc. **Nonintrusive Spells** include spells that deactivate a sheen without causing direct physical damage, including *hold machine, pulse, prang*, etc.

Salvage Results Table

1d6	Module Salvaged
1	Sensor Ring
2	Capacitor
3	Lifter*
4	Field generator
5	Sample Arms
6	Plasma generator**

* Only drifters have lifter modules.
** Only renders and miners have plasma modules.

Salvage

This proficiency allows a Wizard to remove useful bits of functional modules from a deactivated sheen. Such items can sometimes be integrated into items capable of aiding a chaser in future sheen hunts through use of the Artifice proficiency. This proficiency can never be used on an active sheen; it is applicable only on a disabled machine (a machine brought to below 0 hit points).

Particular sheens contain particular modules; see the *Apparatiary's* description of each sheen to determine what types of modules each possesses. Moreover, the way in which a machine is "deactivated" determines whether salvage is an option. The **Salvage Results Table** shows how the method used to deactivate the sheen affects the Salvage proficiency check.

To use this proficiency, the Wizard must spend 1d4 + 2 turns attempting to "salvage" a disabled sheen, at the end of which time the proficiency check is rolled. If successful, the Sheenchaser has managed to detach an undamaged module and—just as importantly—not damage the module while removing it.

The choice of module removed is governed partly by chance, so the **Salvage Results Table** governs the choice of module removed. Each additional rank of this skill (1 slot cost) allows the sheenchaser to modify the result of the roll by +1/–1. If a rolled result indicates a module that the sheen does not or cannot possess, reroll the attempt.

Once a module is removed, it can be successfully incorporated into a useful item for the Wizard with a successful Artifice check. (See the Mecharcana section for examples of new items created from salvaged material.)

Machine Spells

The spells described below represent spells specifically developed by the Wizards of the Vital League. These spells are generally available only to Sheenchaser Wizards. However, at the DM's option, some subset of these spells might leak into the realm of common spells available to any Mage.

Note: The material component for all machine spells is a piece of wire or other small snippet from a previously encountered sheen—many Wizards use a favored trophy of a past encounter over and over again.

Detect Machine

(Divination)
Level: 1
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 60' + 10'/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell lets the caster detect all machines within the area of effect. The area of effect extends in a path 10 feet wide and 60 feet long (plus 10 feet in length per level of the Wizard) in the direction the caster is facing. Scanning a direction requires 1 round, and the caster must be motionless. While the spell indicates the direction of detected sheens, it does not indicate location or distance. The spell detects machine life through walls and obstacles, but its range is reduced by half if the caster stands in a press

of organic beings or in the middle of a living forest or jungle. The spell does not indicate the type or number of machines detected.

Fellow Sheen

(Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Caster
Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the Wizard alters his form—including clothing and equipment—to resemble a sheen of a type previously seen by the caster. The caster's body undergoes a physical alteration, and his size can be changed up to 50%. Note that casters who change into drifters cannot fly (without additional magic), nor does the body of a dasher allow the caster to move at breakneck speeds (without additional magic).

The caster's attack rolls, AC, and saving throws do not change. The spell does not confer the special abilities, attack forms, or defenses of the sheen mimicked. However, the spell does allow the caster to blend into a group of machine forms as long as the spell lasts. Thus, the Wizard could potentially penetrate the heart of a sheen infestation: a machine cyst. Once the sheen form is chosen, it remains for the duration of the spell. The caster can change back to his own form at any time, but this ends the spell immediately. Slain casters automatically return to their normal form.

Hold Machine

(Alteration)
Level: 3
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1d4 round + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1d3 machines
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell temporarily shunts system commands in the target sheens into meaningless feedback loops, rendering immobile 1d3 machine life forms whose total Hit Dice are equal to or less than the caster's level. No more than three machines are affected by a single spell. To cast *hold machine*, the Wizard aims the spell at any point within range, and the three closest machines are considered to be within the area of effect, provided all are within the field of vision and the spell range of the caster. If the spell is successful, it renders the machines immobile for the duration of the spell.

Ablate

(Abjuration)
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 5' radius
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a mobile, faintly shimmering magical sphere centered on the caster. The sphere can partially disperse coherent energy streams of all types, including high-energy particle beams (such as a render's plasma burst). This spell also partially protects against spells and spell-like effects that direct elemental energy, such as *lightning bolt, fireball, cone of cold,* and dragon's breath.

The field's strength is expended as it protects against damaging effects. It can protect against a number of HD of the appropriate damage equal to the level of the caster. If the targets of an appropriate attack within the field suffer more damage dice than the level of the original caster, the field finally winks out. For example, if an 8th-level Wizard casts *ablate* on herself and is subject to a 16d10 plasma burst, the field protects the caster against 8d10 points of damage; however, the caster suffers the remaining 8d10 points of damage as the field collapses. On the other hand, if the caster was first subject to a 6d6 *fireball,* she would receive complete protection, and the protective field would remain capable of absorbing another 2 damage dice before collapsing. Whether the ablative field provides some protection or no protection, the spell ends when the duration elapses. Note that if the field absorbs its damage dice total, it expires before the stated duration.

Unlike most spells, *ablate* was specifically researched to be "stackable." That is, an 8th-level Wizard (specialized in Abjuration) can cast this spell on herself twice to enjoy protection against a full 16 damage dice. Note that the Range: 0 of this spell prevents multiple Wizards from casting this spell on a single target.

Abort

(Abjuration)
Level: 5
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 machine
Saving Throw: Negates

By means of this spell, a Wizard seeks to force a machine life form to report to its machine cyst for deactivation. The caster's level is compared to the sheen's HD. If the chaser's level is higher, the difference is subtracted from the creature's die roll for its saving throw vs. spell. If the sheen's HD is higher, the difference is added to the machine's saving throw.

If the spell is successful, the machine immediately ceases its current activity and moves at all possible speed toward the place where it was assembled. Even if attacked, the machine singlemindedly continues to attempt to reach its cyst. If it manages to gain its machine cyst, it immediately routes itself for deactivation and becomes subject for used parts.

Pulse

(Evocation)
Level: 6
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 30' radius
Saving Throw: Special

When a *pulse* spell is cast, a wave of energy flows from the caster to the limits of the area of effect. The energy isn't harmful in any way to organic beings or natural materials but scrambles the delicate mechanical minds of machine life forms. Any machine within this area loses contact with its own external sensors (it becomes blind and deaf) for 2d6 rounds, suffers 2d6 points of damage, and is stunned and unable to take any

action for 1d4 rounds. A successful save still deactivates the sensors for 1d4 rounds and inflicts 1d6 points of damage to the machine, but the machine is not stunned. Nonstunned machines can still attack and defend themselves, albeit with a –4 penalty to all their actions.

Prang

(Alteration)
Level: 7
Range: 180 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 machine
Saving Throw: Negates

The *prang* spell induces a catastrophic system crash, which results in the destruction of the targeted sheen's digital cognizance. If successful, the sheen's original program and "personality," if any, can never be restored; it's a blank electronic slate. However, if the Wizard who cast the spell also has the Digital Persuasion proficiency, a check at a –4 penalty can be attempted if the caster wishes to activate the functions of the sheen that operate below its cognitive system. (Machine Mages automatically succeed at this proficiency check.) This allows the caster to command the sheen to perform simple tasks, such as "guard", "attack", and "follow". A sheen in this state is incapable of any self-directed activity and lapses into inactivity if not given a command.

If a sheen makes a successful saving throw vs. spell, it still suffers 2d8 + 1 points of damage. If the machine falls below 0 hit points because of the damage, its basic programming remains and reasserts itself once its internal repair subroutines have brought the machine back to positive hit points.

Common Spells vs. Machine Life

Besides the spells specifically developed by the Vital League for use against machine life, many common spells prove efficacious against beings of the machine order. The list below provides a subset of common spells and the special, changed, or additional effects they possess against sheens.

Shocking Grasp—Delivers an additional 1 point of damage per level.

Hold Portal—Machine must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or stand immobile for 1d4 rounds.

Bind—When cast on exposed circuits, causes 1d4 points of damage per level of caster.

Shatter—When cast on a machine, causes 1d6 points of damage per level of caster to a maximum of 6d6.

Wizard Lock—Machine must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or stand immobile for 1d4 rounds.

Lightning Bolt—Targeted machine must make an additional saving throw vs. spell or is also affected as *pulse* spell.

Shout—Delivers 2 additional points of damage per level.

Chain Lightning—As *lightning bolt.*

Comprehend Languages—Allows the caster to interpret the binary tones used by sheens for communication.

Heat Metal—This Priest spell is spectacularly effective: the affected sheen must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or be destroyed in 1d4 rounds.

Continual Darkness—Drifters and flitters obtain their energy directly from ambient light sources (even magical or fire light). If a *darkness* spell centered on a drifter or flitter persists for more than twenty-four hours, the sheen drops to the ground, inert.

Another subset of spells are completely useless against sheens. Because sheens are not "alive" in the sense that biological creatures are, many spells that affect the living completely fail to affect a sheen. Therefore, sheens are immune to all mind-affecting spells, spells that affect life force, and telepathic applications of psionic disciplines. As a guideline, a partial list of spells that do not affect sheens follows, though there might be others that fit the criteria: *detect evil, detect alignment, charm person, charm monster, friends, sleep, spook, taunt, blindness, deafness, ESP, forget, hypnotic pattern, scare, delude, animal friendship, command, enthrall,* etc.

Mecharcana

The preferred tools of the Sheenchaser and Machine Mage run the gamut from the common to the obscure. Most Wizards with these kits have access to the tiny hands pouch described below. The other items described are usually salvaged or created by powerful Sheenchasers or—more often—by Machine Mages. Few of these items are "magical" in the accepted sense, though a few may possess magical enhancements that work synergistically with the technological basis for the effect. These items generally reside in the hands of their creator; however, sometimes such items are gifted to the League or Coalition armory, where they can be then reassigned to those deemed most in need.

Note: Unless stated otherwise, sheen-based items operate for a finite period before losing power. The only way to power these items is to locate an operating sheen, disable it, and successfully perform a Salvage proficiency check to remove the power module. The power module can then be used to recharge the original machine item to its "full charge" condition.

Tiny Hands Pouch

To have the best chance at making Digital Persuasion or Salvage proficiency checks, the Wizard should have a tiny hands pouch, which adds a +1 bonus to each of these checks. There is little to differentiate these kits from a top-notch bundle of a Thief's lockpick kit. Individual Wizards usually personalize their pouches, but each usually contain several sizes of tweezers, clippers, clamps, picks, tongs, and bits of metallic wire of various gauges. All the tools fit into a rolled leather case.

XP Value: 100 **GP Value:** 30

Sensor Ring

Sometimes sheens are deactivated without completely destroying the creature. One such item that Wizards sometimes attempt to salvage from a deactivated sheen is its sensor ring. The sensor ring is a passive ring of flexible metal that can be salvaged from a deactivated machine on a successful Salvage check. Because the ring is flexible, enterprising Wizards can wear it as a belt.

The sensor ring manifests a unique property when active sheens come within several hundred feet: it begins to vibrate subtly. The game effect is that a sensor ring doubles the effective range of all Detect Fumes proficiency checks.

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 60

Capacitor Staff

Sheens have the capacity to "shock" their foes by building up excess electricity in their carapace. Savvy Wizards have discovered that a small module just beneath a sheen's carapace is responsible for this ability. Craftsmanship and artifice sometimes combine to incorporate these modules into wooden staves.

Such staves inflict normal damage in hand-to-hand combat, but the wielder can touch a contact up to three times per day to build up a charge on the staff's tip. With the next successful attack, the charge inflicts an additional 2d4 points of damage (even to a sheen). The capacitor staff has 1d20 + 20 maximum uses.

XP Value: 6,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

Capacitor Wand

Capacitor wands can be salvaged only from flitters. Like other sheens, flitters can build up excess charge for offensive and defensive purposes; however, a flitter can project this charge, and so can the capacitor wand created through the Artifice proficiency.

Capacitor wands are utilized by pointing the end at a target within 30 feet and depressing a contact plate. The tip of the wand discharges an electrical bolt inflicting 3d4 points of damage. Victims who make a successful saving throw vs. spell suffer half damage. A capacitor wand can be used up to three times per day and contains a maximum of 1d20 + 20 total charges.

XP Value: 6,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

Belt of Lifting

Drifters possess special lifter modules that allow them to move about without regard to gravity. Salvagers can sometimes remove this module by making a successful Salvage proficiency check and incorporate it into a heavy leather belt harness.

By dialing a crude knob up or down, the wearer of the belt can ascend or descend vertically at 20 feet per round. To date, the few belts of lifting ever created have yet to fail. The belt can lift a maximum of 400 pounds. Note that if the dial is turned "up," the belt lifts off even if no one is currently wearing it!

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 1,000

Cloak of Shields

Many forms of machine life possess invisible protective fields assembled from stray bits of matter. A successful salvage operation on a sheen can sometimes remove the module responsible for such fields. In at least one case, the field module was incorporated into the weave of a cloak through clever artifice.

The cloak of shields provides exactly the type of protection once enjoyed by the machine from which it was taken. The most likely cloak of shields is one that drains 1 point of damage from every successful attack directed at the wearer of the cloak, to a maximum of 6 points of damage per day. Higher grade cloaks assembled from higher grade sheens could conceivably provide more protection. See the SA entry for walkers for more examples of this technology in use. On average, all cloaks can absorb an absolute total of 300 hp before requiring a recharge.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 500

Arm Harness

Aggressive varieties of machine life possess dreadfully slender metallic limbs capable of independently targeting and attacking designated foes. Salvage is sometimes capable of removing a sample, arm without destroying this ability. With some artifice, such an arm can be attached to a leather torso harness.

Someone wearing the arm harness has a third appendage capable of delivering a melee attack independently of the wearer's normal arms. The arm harness is normally controlled by a large dial with two settings: on and off. When set to on, the metallic appendage automatically attacks anything that moves within 5 feet of the wearer (including incautious allies). The lowest grade arm harness attacks once per round with a THAC0 of 19, inflicting 1d6 points of damage. Arm harnesses made from more powerful forms of machine life are correspondingly more powerful (see the THAC0 and damage values of sheens described in the *Apparatiary*); however, no one has managed to make an arm harness from the sampler or saw arms of a render.

XP Value: 2000 **GP Value:** 1000

Plasma Lance

The terrible render possesses a technologically generated weapon akin to a dragon's breath: a plasma burst. Because organic life is almost always destroyed when confronted by a render, the possibility of salvaging a deactivated render is almost nil. But, legends persist of a Machine Mage who has done the impossible and incorporated a plasma producing module into a Wizard-operated weapon.

The plasma lance has a large metallic "backpack" that must be worn by the wielder. The backpack is actually the plasma module affixed to leather straps and a frame rack. The module trails dark tubes, which connect to an implement that has some resemblance to a squat lance with a hole in place of the sharp tip. It is from this hole that the wielder directs a burst of plasma.

The plasma lance can be used a maximum of seven times before its magnetically sealed store of energized plasma is exhausted. Furthermore, the lance can be used no more than once per day, because it takes twenty-four hours to build up sufficient potential energy for a discharge. Unlike other machine items, the plasma lance cannot be recharged.

When the plasma lance is discharged, a searing cone of superheated particles streams forth. The cone is 90 feet long, 5 feet wide at the origin, and gradually widens to 30 feet wide at the terminus of the effect. All creatures (both organic and machine) struck by the plasma must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer 16d10 points of damage; creatures that successfully save still suffer half damage. Treat the plasma like fire for purposes of invulnerabilites and protective magics.

XP Value: 10,000 **GP Value:** 20,000

Plasma Lancet

A few lesser versions of the plasma lance are rumored to exist, these created from the plasma module of a miner sheen instead of a render. The lesser item is called a plasma lancet. The lancet corresponds in all ways to the parameters of the lance, save that the lancet's cone of effect is reversed: the searing cone of superheated particles is 10 feet long, 3 feet wide at the origin and gradually narrowing to 1 inch wide

Machine Adventure Track

◆ The PCs stumble upon a shallow but perfectly cut quarry in the wilderness. Strange pieces of shiny iron and other bits of an unknown material (plastic) litter the site, but no machine currently works the site. The cast-off parts are likely an enigma to the heroes, but any sensitives among the heroes might receive the strong feeling or a dream that suggests that the pieces are part of a deep and abiding danger.

◆ The PCs discover half a chassis from a drifter. Close examination reveals that the strange object appears to have fallen from the sky. This machine specimen is nonfunctional but obviously is composed of the materials found at the quarry.

◆ The PCs spy an active walker moving away. If the PCs close, the walker defends itself to the death.

◆ The PCs glimpse the passage of a dasher and realizes it may be akin to the walker by a few spare parts cast off in its wake.

◆ The PCs encounter a small group of walkers by a strong walker.

◆ The company comes upon a desperate battle between a League Wizard and a small group of sheens. If the Sheenchaser survives, the party can learn something of the threat machine cysts present.

◆ The company meets a Machine Mage, complete with a flitter "familiar" and several machine items. If the PCs' encounter with the Sheenchaser (see above) is recent, it's likely they find his or her appurtenances strange. If allowed, the Machine Mage gives the PCs the alternative view of machines, explaining how utilizing their "technology" can prove advantageous.

◆ The company runs into the handiwork of a render if the PCs are of low to middle level, or run into a render itself if the PCs are of middle to high level.

◆ The PCs have the chance to make a decision: accompany two Sheenchasers to exterminate a newly formed machine cyst or accompany some Machine Mages to "salvage" a newly formed cyst; for the cyst, either groups' aims result in the cyst's destruction. The small cyst has relatively few underground passages, and is defended only by a few sheens (enough to provide the PCs a challenge).

◆ Possibly at the small cyst, the PCs discover evidence that there is a group of biological entities working with some machine cysts, and these beings might be the machines real masters.

◆ The PCs find a long-established machine cyst, a large subterranean technological structure that makes for a long series of adventures. The cyst is well defended by sheens, including several renders and other varieties of new (DM-created) machines. Within the heart of the large cyst, the heroes discover half-human machines. These are the fabled sheenmasters (though some might call them cyborgs). The sheenmasters want to use the PCs' organic bodies for "spare parts," much as Machine Mages want to scavenge sheen parts!

at the terminus. Soil melts away from the touch of the plasma lancet, while creatures struck by the plasma must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer 4d10 points of damage; those who successfully save suffer half damage.

XP Value: 4,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

Adventure Hooks

Incorporating the Mage vs. Machine material into an ongoing campaign should be gradual. Slowly introducing enigmatic clues regarding the secret existence of sheens, Sheenchasers, and those who attempt to emulate sheen technology is the best way to heighten player suspense. On the other hand, a new campaign incorporating elements from this article might begin with the party Wizard as a member of either the League or the Coalition.

The Adventure Track is an aid to a DM considering adding some of the material in this article to his campaign. Generally, the Track is a suggested timeline of machine-related occurances. The events described in the Track should be interspersed between other events and adventures otherwise suitable to your campaign, at least at first. At some point, your PCs might decide to focus exclusively on machine-related adventures for a time. If the Track method is used as a timeline of events, there is nothing to prevent the campaign from diverging from the Track at any point.

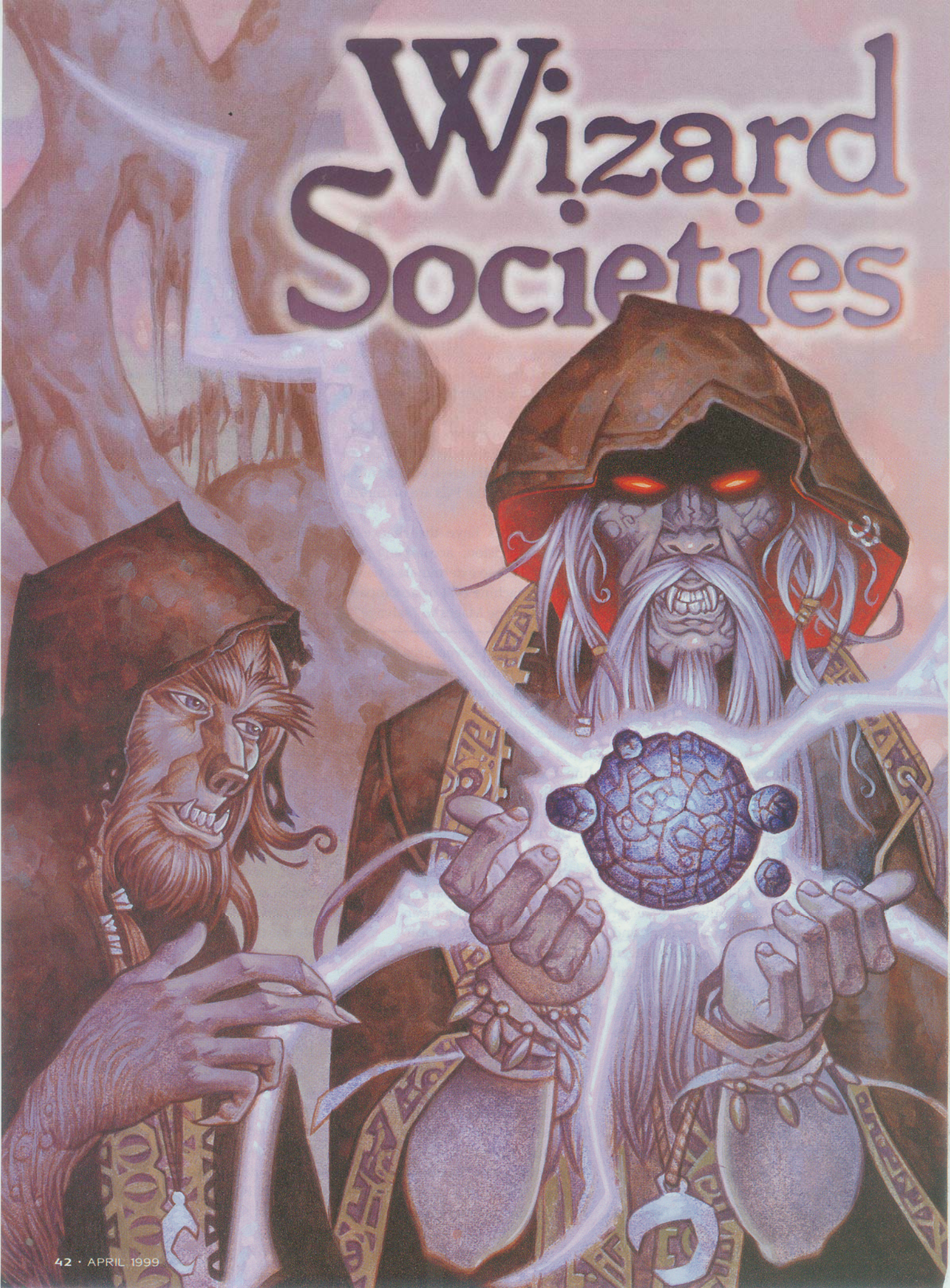
Alternatively, treat the Track merely as a set of adventure hooks from which you can choose adventure ideas. Just because a few sheens are encountered by your PCs does not mean cysts and Machine Mages must appear.

If you develop your campaign using the last point on the Track, other campaign directions become possible. The most obvious plot revolves around cyborgs from another Plane invading the campaign world for humanoid bodies. The effort might be a localized one, indicating that other machine cysts are the result of unrelated events. Worse, every machine cyst could represent a beachhead by the sheenmasters. In this case, sheenmasters enter the technologically induced dimensional gates only when a cyst has grown large enough and gathered enough resources to construct one.

If the PCs survive with their new knowledge, they stand a good chance of bringing the factious League and Coalition into an alliance, not to mention representatives of other races. It could all come down to the PCs' risking it all and venturing through a seized dimensional warp gate to confront the sheenmasters in their own plane: an entire machine world, where biologicals are the exception, and sheens rule.

Bruce Cordell keeps a small robot called Happy at his desk. Happy makes itself useful around the office by fetching coffee, recharging laptop computers, and killing vermin with capacitor bolts. Sadly, Happy took offense at this article's anti-machine bias and deleted half the text before Bruce caught it. Happy's current whereabouts are unknown.

Wizard Societies



Like Casting Spells?

Join the Club.

Although they represent only a small portion of the population of even the most magically inclined community, Wizards wield great power. Not only do they have phenomenal personal power but also their intelligence, influence, and wealth give them clout greater than that of ordinary folk. Whenever Wizards gather to pool their resources, the resulting association is influential far beyond the number of its members.

by Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by Michael Sutfin

Since the goals of Wizards are so diverse, such societies tend to be small. The largest often fragment into smaller organizations or fail to achieve their goals effectively due to internal conflict. Moreover, the overall scarcity of Wizards imposes a mandatory ceiling on society memberships.

Wizards work together best when they join for a specific, temporary purpose. A handful of Mages who wish to rout a dragon from a nearby promontory, for example, might pool their Divinations to determine the dragon's weaknesses, enchant a few charged magical items, and finally dispatch a group of adventurers to slay the beast, aided by spells from afar (*control weather* to keep the dragon grounded, for example). Most of these temporary alliances deal with major and immediate threats to the Wizards or their homes.

When the cause calls for a long-term or permanent association, fewer Wizards rise to meet the challenge. The individual Wizard's plans might require him to visit other planes, seclude himself in a tower to construct magical items, or be long absent for other reasons. More selfish Wizards simply do not wish to associate with their peers for fear that their hard-earned spells might be learned by others. Personal dislike and professional jealousy also play their part. While these matters might factor less in a temporary alliance, they tend to keep memberships in permanent societies low.

Sample Societies

These societies represent assemblies of both evil and good Wizards. They hail from both "generic" and world-specific campaigns, and they encompass a wide range of Wizards. These sample societies each have their own agendas, personalities, and quirks.

The Crucible of Thurn

The Crucible is run by Thurn, a dual-classed human Bard/Conjurer with an incredible number of spells at his disposal. He is the society's founder, heart, and brain. The Crucible meets in Fuinahiir, an old elven city now occupied by humans. The group's bimonthly meetings are held on Thurn's sizable estate near the center of the city. His home features a monstrous dome visible for miles. Gigantic paintings and statuary inside are sure to awe first-time guests.

Thurn himself is a large man with a physically commanding appearance. He prefers to use spells like *Rary's mnemonic enhancer* to allow him access to more low-level spells. If the DM uses the PLAYER'S OPTION® rules, Thurn typically selects as many lower-level spells as he is allowed with his spell points—both as Bard and Conjurer. Although a *globe of invulnerability* would slow him down, most people assume that somebody with so many spells available must be a Wizard of godlike power. His reputation alone protects him well.

The membership is open to any spellcaster who is interested in learning more about magic. The society boasts a larger percentage of Specialist Wizards than the population as a whole. Bards, Priests who can use Wizard spells (through PLAYER'S OPTION rules), and custom classes are all represented in the Crucible. The entry fee is 100 gp, plus 100 gp per year. Thurn appoints officers as needed, and they hold the office until death or until Thurn removes them. Currently, the Crucible counts four officers with a membership of just under thirty.

Aside from the financial obligation, members must make one spell available per meeting. Others have the right to copy this spell to their own spellbook, although they must still pay the owner for the right. Typically, a Wizard earns little or nothing for a common spell; 300–1,200 gp for offering a rare spell; and 500–3,000 gp if he offers a valuable, unique, or very rare spell. Most Wizards offer common spells of low level (1st–3rd), although three or four of them offer either a higher level spell (generally no higher than 6th) or a rarer spell. Once per meeting, a braggart might put up a unique or high-level spell. If nobody else comes forward, Thurn digs through his libraries and presents a foreign or forgotten spell of some value.

Some very prominent people (the high priest of Thor, the resident gray elven diplomat, the famous Oracle of Barduun) have accused the Crucible of various illegal activities, ranging from sedition and concealment of refugees to theft and smuggling. Many people openly feel that Thurn is preparing for a rebellion and encouraging lawless bands by providing them with magical assistance and mundane weapons. Mentioning the rumors in front of Thurn is an invitation to a deadly duel or, at the very least, a verbal barrage of shouts and insults.

Thurn, male human B12/W(Con)18: AC 2; MV 12; hp 73; THAC0 15, #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 16; ML 16; AL NG; *rod of absorption, broadsword of wounding, cloak of protection +4, ring of protection +2, ring of air elemental command.* Spells memorized: *affect normal fires, burning hands, cantrip, charm person, color spray, dancing lights, enlarge, feather fall, light, magic missile, shocking grasp, sleep; blindness, ESP, flaming sphere, glitterdust, invisibility, knock, levitate, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, web; dispel magic, fireball, flame arrow, hold undead, item, protection from normal missiles, tongues, vampiric touch; dimension door, improved invisibility, phantasmal killer, plant growth, Rary's mnemonic enhancer* (×2, already cast to grant additional spells); *cloudkill, contact other plane, extension II, passwall, summon shadow; demi-shadow magic, geas, project image; finger of death, Mordenkainen's sword, teleport without error; Otto's irresistible dance, power word, blind; time stop.*

Thurn is as autocratic as any society leader can be. Most likely, his authority will remain unchallenged for the duration of his life because of his clear vision, his awesome personal power, and his ability to convince others to be happy in their current, subservient position.

The Fellowship of Amhurst

Collectively, the Fellowship has no real goal, although their stated purpose is "to explore the use of magic for the benefit of all humankind." Individually, the mind of each member is a viper's den of plots and schemes, as each does what he can to increase his own power. The Wizards are all nobles who dabble in magic out of boredom, curiosity, or customary family practice. Their attitude makes the society more of a social club than an organization with any purpose. Although they are not known for their magical power, the Fellowship members have great wealth and political influence.

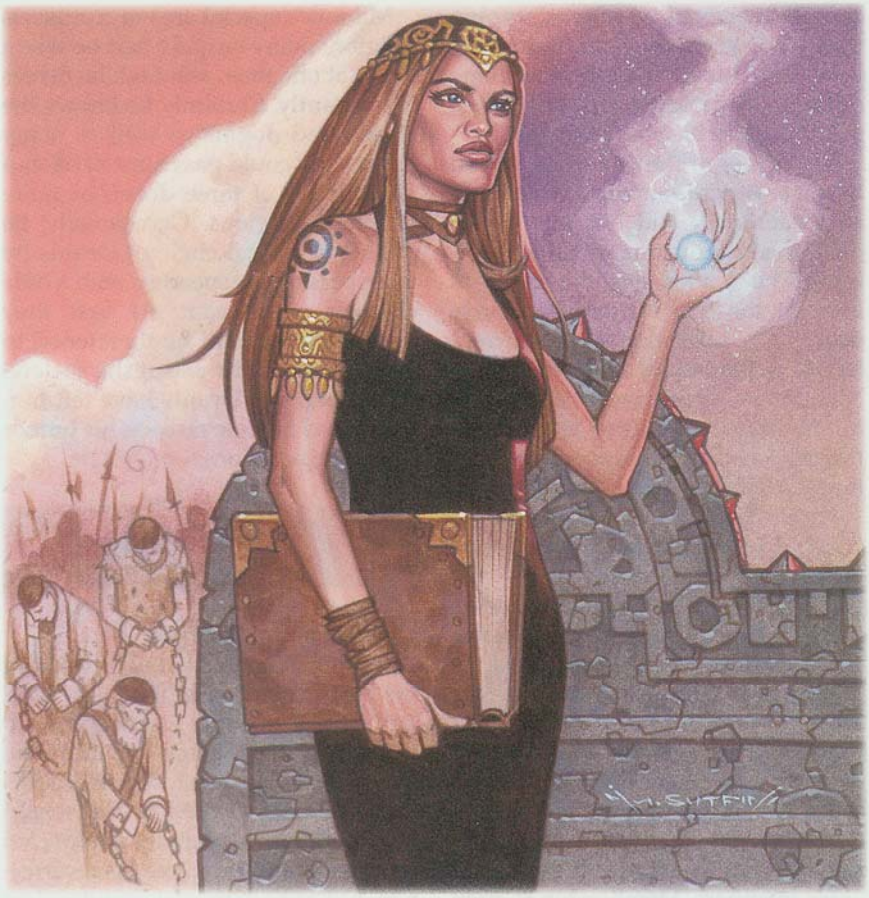
The Fellowship chain of command has its own rules, but it somehow manages to match Amhurst's class system; the highest nobility are in charge, and lowly knights and unlanded nobles are at the bottom. Character level has no influence whatsoever. In fact, none of the current members is higher than 8th level, and few are higher than 6th. A company of well-armed bodyguards protects the seemingly unwarded trove of magical items and coin.

Prospective members must shell out a large amount of cash to join. Various fees are sometimes made up on the spot, inflating the requirements according to the prospect's ability to pay. No one can join for less than 3,000 gp, regardless of favor or relation. Conversely, 20,000 gp convinces even the most reluctant member to cast his vote for approval, since part of the entry fees are split among existing members. The fees are intentionally kept high to deter commoners. Membership is a lifetime privilege.

The Fellowship numbers some eighty members, of whom a third to a half are present at any given meeting. With the Wizards' bodyguards, lackeys, and servants, the fellowship's meeting place must accommodate nearly 250 individuals, all carefully arranged according to stature.

At the top of the Fellowship is Peren "Standfast" Holzenfeld, a fiery man of royal blood. Peren "stands fast" at well under 5 feet tall, although he's never been known to back down from any threat, regardless of size or temper. He sees himself as a role model for the aristocracy—fearless, cultured, proud, and pious. In private, he's as coarse as a sailor and twice as loud. He seems to thrive on challenge; his belligerent attitude and crude tongue have earned him enemies in every camp, including his own. Peren welcomes them all, however, and still holds his position as the most important man in the country, except, perhaps, for the king.

Despite the society's ineffectiveness as a whole, any of the members can provide many opportunities for adventure or conflict. All of the nobility have enemies, and even the bodyguards, most of whom are high-level Fighters of widespread fame, have their own hidden objectives. Player characters might be drawn into schemes to embarrass a rival, disrupt a duke's scheme, or penetrate a baron's home just to have his bodyguard removed for incompetence.



Society members often wear distinguishing tattoos or jewelry.

Perren "Standfast" Holzenfeld, male human M6: AC 4; MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18, #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 14; ML 19; AL N; *dagger +2, bracers of defense AC 4, potion of polymorph self*. Spells memorized: *charm person, friends, sleep, unseen servant; ESP, stinking cloud, wizard lock; dispel magic, fireball, phantom steed*.

Holzenfeld's bodyguards include a 9th-level Fighter specialized in the spear (a slight man of great speed, he uses the spear two-handed), a 12th-level Fighter who won national fame last year in a swordsmanship competition, and a hulking, deaf half-ogre named Golem. All are currently loyal, although another Wizard has tricked Golem into believing that he can cure Golem's deafness if the brute reports some of the things he sees on the Holzenfeld estate. Golem has not said anything yet, but he has not told his master about the recruitment attempt, either. The offer is tempting, but Holzenfeld has taken special care to make Golem happy.

The Seers' Circle

Mages and Diviners who wish to know the future join the Seers' Circle. Their collective ability to predict the future is questionable at best, despite their individual wisdom. The Seers are not astrologers or prophets. They attempt to read the future in the past, much as modern political advisors, except that the Seers are generally correct. Ironically, they are best known as historians because of the immense library housed in their guildhall.

Only about one quarter of the members are Wizards. The remainder are historians, advisors, and astrologers. Any member can use the library, but even for members, restrictions are stiff. No Circle books leave the premises, although members are allowed to copy books by mundane or magical methods. No weapons, armor, or obvious magical items such as staves and wands can be taken into the library. Visitors pass through a screen that temporarily disrupts

extradimensional spaces, dumping their contents on the floor. The screen is meant to keep thieves from walking out with a whole stack of books in a *portable hole* (which has happened).

The leader of the society is elected from the Wizards among the membership each year and has few duties other than conducting monthly meetings. The leader has the right to appoint the few officers the Circle needs for operation. The current leader is Mihouk of Redfern, a laid-back former adventurer known more for his sense of humor and boyish face than for his magical accomplishments. Half of his speeches start with, "I remember when. ..." Careful listeners note, however, that he's not often wrong when speaking about the volatile religions in the city. He knows the Priests well and always knows who's in line for a high priesthood.

Members must demonstrate the ability to read and must pay an initial fee of 100 gp, but the annual fee is only 25 gp. Members can contact sages and others of great knowledge through the Circle, since almost all nearby scholars are members or honorary members. Membership is often dull but informative. Characters can meet NPCs who might drag them into an adventuring search for information, delivering packages, or conducting experiments. Rumors of forbidden or dangerous research (necromancy, wild magic, and magic systems the DM wishes to introduce to the campaign) might necessitate a call for adventurers as well, preferably from within the society.

Mihouk of Redfern, male human M8: AC 10; MV 12; hp 19; THAC0 18, #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 13; ML 16; AL LG; staff, *dagger +1, potion of levitation*. Spells memorized: *detect magic, identify, spook, unseen servant; ESP, know alignment, summon swarm; lightning bolt, nondetection, protection from normal missiles; detect scrying, polymorph self.*

In addition to the pair of weapons and his potion, Mihouk carries a selection of adventurer's fare at all times: a pouch of chalk, a bag of marbles, a flask or two of Greek fire, and a length of rope. Old habits die hard. Due to a little-known phobia, he always carries a small, tightly sealed bag full of wolfsbane and has a silver dagger tucked into his boot.

Mihouk's special area of concern is religion; many suspect that he was a Priest at one time, although he denies it constantly. Certainly he knows the rituals and dogma as well as many Priests and could pass himself off as a worshipper of three dozen or more different religions. Occasionally, he offends the local circle of Druids by interspersing his speeches with a little of their secret cant. At first they rebuked him, until he threatened to offer classes in its use at the society! Since then, the Druids have left him alone, and he now restricts his humor to private occasions.

Brotherhood of the Wick

Although outsiders know little about the Brotherhood of the Wick, the local authorities attribute many crimes to the group. A renowned Paladin who suggested that the Brotherhood's charter be made public was dragged down into the sewers by a tentacled monster and killed. Since his resurrection, he has been much less outspoken in his opinions.

The group takes its name from the candle-lit chambers where the members meet. No outside light source (especially a magical one) is allowed within the underground chambers below the city of Luskan in Faerûn. The leader goes by the name of Damlen and has never been seen in public.

The Brotherhood of the Wick is a dark group with mysterious aims ruled by a mind flayer with a *ring of alter self* on one of his three bony fingers. Wizards of all kinds listen to the illithid's demagoguery. Occasionally, he secretly kills and devours one of these Wizards, loudly decrying whichever group is the subject of his latest rant as the party responsible for the unfortunate death.

Membership seems to be by invitation only. The current membership numbers only about a dozen, but the members actively pursue the illithid's goal. Most prominent among these aims seems to be undermining the government of Luskan, the support of Underdark factions (including the drow), and the destruction of ships and warehouses, leading to bankruptcies among merchants and higher prices throughout the region. Although these activities appear random, they are actually carefully crafted threads in a devious mind flayer plot to gain a safe passage to the surface world through Luskan.

Damlen, mind flayer: AC 3; MV 12; hp 44; THAC0 11; #AT 4; Special; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 17; ML 16; AL LE; *cloak of displacement, boots of elvenkind, ring of telekinesis, ring of alter self.*

Damlen hates drow. Although he seems to support their activities, he is actually setting up several merchant and noble houses for a great civil war. He plans to summon a large contingent of mind flayers to mop up the survivors and gather loot. This plan is secondary to his main goal of setting up a permanent "safe house" in Luskan to serve as a stepping stone to the rest of Faerûn. Unknown to his followers, he has located a tiny dead-magic zone underneath the city. The zone is central to his plans, since the mind flayers' powerful psionics are not hindered there.

The Ladies of Crede

A group of Wizards comprised solely of women, the Ladies of Crede take their name from the former name of Oakenhart (from the GREYHAWK setting), where they make their base. The group is civic minded and pursues such goals as education, help for the underprivileged, and crime prevention. The priority of their goals changes with the times, but they never address such things as war, public works, or the building of monuments—they are far more concerned with people than with things.

About thirty ladies are active in the membership at any one time, although over two hundred are listed on the roster. Most are willing to devote their time to whichever goal they favor. Only a handful make the easier donation of spells described below.

The society is open to any female Wizard who wishes to pursue the group's goals. Each is required to contribute at least five hours or five useful spells a week. The useful spells might be Divinations to help solve a crime, Alterations to help build a place to live for a homeless

person, or Illusions to reinforce a speaking engagement by another member. The society asks no money beyond the initial 50 gp entry fee. They meet in public places or in a member's home.

The Ladies elect nine council members, who then select a First Lady from among them. The First Lady has no greater power than the others do, but the Ladies found that other people prefer to deal with a single leader. When matters are brought to a vote, the First Lady's vote serves as a tie-breaker.

The current First Lady is an angelic, dark-haired half-elf named Amiranda. Under her leadership, the Ladies have become more dynamic, especially in the area of law enforcement. Amiranda is quite proud that she has never taken a human life, although she has helped capture dozens of criminals with her magic. Her spell selection reflects her desire to avoid violence whenever possible. Several major victories against the Thieves' Guild have earned the Ladies the enmity of that organization. Thankfully, no reprisals have come yet.

Amiranda, female half-elf M12: AC 3; MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 14; ML 14; AL LG; *staff of thunder and lightning, bracers of defense AC 6, deck of illusions.* Spells memorized: *charm person, color spray, light, sleep; ESP, knock, levitate, mirror image; clairvoyance, hold person, protection from normal missiles, tongues; emotion, illusionary wall, magic mirror, Otiluke's resilient sphere; feeblemind, seeming, sending, wall of force; geas.*

The Conventicle of Acererak

This group of Wizards extols the secretive arch-lich of Oerth. They believe that Acererak epitomizes the search for magical knowledge and all yearn for lichdom themselves one day. It's likely that none of the two dozen or so members will ever become a lich, due to the level requirements and hazards along the way. They pose a real threat, however, as they create and consort with undead of all sorts.

Holn, a vampire, rules the group. Holn is a cynical creature who failed in his bid for lichdom and settled for a lesser form instead. He has long been free-willed and commands many werewolves and at least two lesser vampires. He still believes that he can make the transition from vampirism to lichdom.

Naturally, some Necromancers have seats in the society. Illusionists, Invokers, and Conjurers are the next most common specialists. Even Wild Mages, Elementalists, and other Wizards join from time to time. With so few members, the group needs little in the way of leadership. Holn has appointed an assistant to handle some of the drudgery, but he does most of the real work himself.

A new member must take a solemn oath—supposedly witnessed by an avatar of Orcus/Tenebrous—confirming his eternal membership in the group, transcending even death. The novitiate is marked as a member by having a fingernail blackened as if bruised, by growing fangs, or (in special cases, said to indicate infernal favor) by red eyes. Although these marks can be disguised or concealed in public, they must be displayed openly when the group meets.

Members must also pay to join. The offering is up to the individual member and can be made with coin or a magical item. A magical item worth at least 1,000 XP always earns acceptance, as does a donation over 2,500 gp. If less is offered, the applicant is given a chance to add to his offering. Failure to meet the minimum offering with a second donation generally results in rejection of membership approval. No dues are asked.

Many of the members appear to be undead, even if they're not. Custom spells and clever cosmetics give the appearance of undeath. Meetings tend to appear downright morbid, with black the dominant color of clothing and ashen the primary color of skin. The group meets in Holn's dungeon, arriving secretly or in disguise. Disclosure of membership in the group or revealing the group's aims results in the transgressor's disintegration, courtesy of Holn's spells.

Holn, male vampire M15: AC 1; MV 12, Fl 18 (C); hp 48; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 4 plus energy drain; Str 18/76, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14; ML 16; AL CE. Spells memorized: *burning hands, chill touch, enlarge, magic missile, wall of fog; blindness, fog cloud, Melf's acid arrow, pyrotechnics, summon swarm; dispel magic, flame arrow, haste, lightning bolt, vampiric touch; enervation, ice storm, phantasmal killer, rainbow pattern, solid fog, wall of ice; cloudkill, cone of cold, demi-shadow monsters, summon shadow, teleport; death fog, shades; limited wish.*

The Veiled Alliance of Silver Springs

The Alliance chapter of the Silver Springs on Athas is in chaos after the death of their previous leader, Alraiik of Urik. His whimsical and often contradictory commands left much room for speculation as to how the Alliance should proceed after his death. Currently, six Preservers vie for leadership. They have come to a tentative truce and are toying with the idea of equal leadership, although each plainly wishes to have absolute rule over the chapter.

Amid the chaos, Verdanis, a Defiler agent of Lalali-Puy, has slipped into the organization. Due to the lack of sanctioned activities and irregular meetings, he has not learned much about the group. By the same token, it might be a long time before his presence is discovered. By then he could destroy the Alliance chapter for good and give Lalali-Puy priceless information to use against her native chapter.

Most of the members are not residents of Silver Springs. They are wanderers who initially stopped at the springs for water and were contacted by the Alliance chapter. The total number of members hovers around sixty, scattered across the Tablelands. Each of those vying for leadership commands the loyalty of 2–7 other Preservers, with the remainder undecided or uncaring.

Prominent among the squabbling leaders is Relsek the White, a native elf whose name comes from his shocking platinum blonde hair. He is a Fighter/Preserver who uses his wild talent of *death field* quite effectively against ordinary preservers. He suspects that somebody

has infiltrated the chapter and wishes to tighten restrictions on membership, which would eliminate some of the current members. Obviously, those who would be eliminated oppose his bid for leadership. Just as obviously, Lalali-Puy's agent is among the most outspoken of those who argue against the suggestion.

Relsek the White, elf male F12/W (Preserver)11: AC 5 (1 with *armor* spell); MV 12; hp 50; THAC0 9, #AT 3/2 (2 with sword); Dmg by weapon +1; Str 17, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 15; ML 14; AL CG; *bone short sword of quickness, potion fruit of extra-healing*. Spells memorized: *armor, enlarge, mount, unseen servant; invisibility, levitate, strength, web; blink, feign death, phantom steed, slow; dimension door, fear, stoneskin; feeblemind, shadow door, transmute rock to mud.*

Verdanis, male Human W(Defiler)7: AC 5; MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 17, Dex 9, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 19; ML 12; AL NE; steel dagger, *bracers of defense* AC 5, *potion fruit of gaseous form*. Spells memorized: *change self, charm person, friends, shield; ESP, forget, whispering wind; non-detection, secret page; wizard eye.*

Designing New Societies

Obviously, Wizard societies are vastly different. Some are helpful and supportive of the communities where they live, while others are pits of hatred that destroy life and hope. The details might be different, but Wizard societies of all sorts have common characteristics.

The first impression a newcomer receives is the society's name. Common names reflect the society's goal, but other groups identify themselves with their founder or their commonality (i.e., "the Seers' Circle"). Some common words used by societies are: alliance, assembly, association, band, brotherhood, cabal, circle, clan, company, conventicle, coven, fellowship, fraternity, guild, league, organization, sisterhood, sorority, syndicate, and union. Other, more creative names might arise from the group's goal. Some are decided by the founder and have a mysterious or unknown meaning (i.e., "The Crucible of Thurn").

Each society must have a goal. The goal can be general ("to help the community") or very specific ("to remove the king"). The goal is defined in the society's charter (if it has one) and might change after being accomplished or rendered invalid. More often, the society dissolves, although many of the same members might start a new society later. The society's goal is its most telling characteristic.

Opposition comes from various sources. It might be as simple and concrete as the army that protects a tyrant the society wishes to remove, or it could be as complicated and vague as public opinion or discrimination. Other power groups, such as priesthoods, the nobility, merchant guilds, and other Wizards might also oppose the society's goal. Monsters and powerful NPCs all have their own agendas and might favor the society or work against it in pursuit of their own goals.

All societies have a structure. They have a leader (or leaders) and a membership. The group might be as small as four or five, or it might number several hundred. Typically, the larger the group, the more officials are needed to run it. One member might be in charge of recruiting, one a liaison with the government, one a record keeper or secretary, etc. These officers might be elected by the general membership, appointed by the leader, or even selected at random (not a recommended method, although Wild Mages favor it).

The most visible member of the society is its leader. Whether the founder or the latest in a dynasty spanning generations, the leader is the most influential person in the society. If the society has no permanent leader or no single leader, the person with the greatest influence on the rest of the group should be described. Even in chaotic or disorganized societies, some members are more dominant than others. Their personal goals, their ability to force the society into action, and their resources should be described as well.

Each society has its own unique requirements. These include requirements for membership eligibility, dues, obligations of time and effort, and standards of behavior. Some of the more restrictive societies might allow only Mages or only specialists of one type. Some preclude membership by nonhumans (or humans). Most have an alignment restriction. Failure to uphold the society's requirements might result in suspension, fines, expulsion, or even death.

Balancing the requirements are the benefits of joining a society. One of the most common is the opportunity to meet other Wizards, with whom characters can trade, discuss technique, or train. Other benefits might also be social in nature: prestige, political power, and possibly even an intimidating reputation. In game play, characters known (or suspected) to be allied with a society might incur reaction modifiers, based on outsider attitudes toward the society. Some associations offer more material benefits, like a source of high-grade scroll paper, affordable and readily accessible material components, or the chance to learn a new spell.

DMs can personalize Wizard Societies (including those described earlier) with their own details. These include titles, clothing, a floor plan of the base of operations, and other minor points that serve to make the society unique and memorable. At this point, the DM can throw in a twist if he likes—the leader is a doppleganger, the society is losing members to another society, its activities are illegal and the players don't know until they've joined, or other problems that create roleplaying opportunities and make play interesting.

Step by Step Creation

Suppose the DM wishes to create a society that the PCs can encounter and possibly join. He sees many opportunities for the society to serve as an adventure hook. He starts with an NPC already known to the characters, giving them a rationale for hearing about the organization and a mentor within it.

The NPC is Terron the Almond Mage, known to the PCs as Judge Terron, who has both sentenced the PCs and freed them on different occasions. They also saved his son from a potentially disastrous scandal, putting him in their debt. Having seen the PCs' character and abilities first-hand, he makes a good sponsor.

The DM decides the judge couldn't be the leader of the organization, nor could he play a major role, given how much time his judicial position requires. The DM delegates the judge to a former leader position, giving him prestige without real duties. With

that much, the DM decides to name his society. Running down the list of suggestions, he considers that many of the names have too "modern" a feel for his society, which he wishes to make old and secretive. He settles on The Brotherhood and names it after Folte, a name familiar to the players through numerous campaign spells. The Brotherhood of Folte is born.

"Why did Folte start the society?" the DM asks. Looking through his campaign material and seeing that many of Folte's spells are elemental-based, he decides that an extra-planar connection would be appropriate. Since the DM wishes to use the society as a source of adventures, he describes Folte's original purpose as the location and monitoring or closing of extra-planar *gates*. At their current levels, he can send the PCs in search of possible *gates* and use a bait-and-switch tactic to change their goal once they arrive on the scene. For example, the first *gate* might be a false alarm; the rumors were started by neighbors fearful of the power of a Conjurer who threatened to unleash terrible monsters on a township if the didn't concede to him large tracts of land. At higher levels, the DM can send the PCs through the *gates*, leading to adventures on different planes!

For structural purposes, the DM decides to have the leadership pass on by nomination, so that each leader is handpicked and trained by the previous leader. The members elect officers and other positions of leadership. The DM leaves open the number of members in the Brotherhood for right now, detailing only Terron, the current leader (as yet unnamed), and a few others he plans to introduce soon. Because of the widespread area in which the society operates (worldwide and more, in fact), it must have some power. He decides that he'd rather have a few relatively powerful Wizards than hundreds of weaker ones.

When considering society requirements, the DM remembers that the PC Wizards have been spending large amounts of gold on their own projects, so he cuts them a break and decides that the entry fee will be waived by Terron, hinting at the man's importance within the society. They must still pay monthly dues, however, of 40 gp per month. Members are allowed to wear a white cloak as a sign of their affiliation. As they undergo quests for the Brotherhood, they can add gold emblems representing their level and society status to their plain white cloak.

Some society leaders are not even remotely human.

At some point within the society's history, its activities have come to the attention of several factions. An efreet sultan, a chasme tanar'ri, a slaad lord, and several ghosts have had power plays thwarted by the Brotherhood in the past several hundred years. Any of these villains or their minions would be happy to capture and interrogate a novice Brother. Characters proudly displaying their cloaks could find trouble anywhere.

Looking for a twist, the DM decides that it is unusual that Terron is a former leader yet still active in the Brotherhood. Why is he no longer the leader? He decides that some person or faction within the Brotherhood asked Terron to step down. This idea creates some possible tension between Terron and the current leader and means that his sponsorship of the PCs might not make them honored members in everybody's eyes. He leaves the details alone for right now, coming back to it later.

Tinkering with the rest of the details, the DM decides that Conjurers and Dimensionalists (from the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* rules) would be good classes for members of this society, making a note to that effect for later when he must provide statistics for other members. He tightens the society's goal by adding that the group's reason for monitoring *gates* is to protect humans and their allies from dangerous creatures from other planes. Not all *gates* should be closed. This comment makes restricting members to non-Evil alignments a good idea, and the DM writes this down. He also draws a sketch of their meeting place, decides on meeting times, and creates some names to be used for members the PCs might meet right away. As a finishing touch, he devises secret greetings and titles for the Brotherhood. His society is now ready to be used in the campaign.

The only society to which Lloyd belongs is the RPGA® Network, which doesn't require you to have a tattoo—or hunt and kill former members.

Nodwick in:
LITTLE TOMB OF HORRORS
FINALLY, WE'VE FOUND THE ENTRANCE TO ACERERAK'S TOMB! THE LAST TWO CAVERNS ALMOST GOT US KILLED!
A-HEM.
OKAY, THEY ALMOST GOT NODWICK KILLED.
AHEM!
FINE! THEY DID GET NODWICK KILLED! HAPPY?
AFTER BEING RESURRECTED TWICE WITH DUCT TAPE?
WHO WOULDN'T BE?
LOOK OUT!! A MONSTER!
OH. SORRY. IT'S JUST A PAINTING.
HEY! A SECRET PASSAGE!
SEE ANYTHING?
NO.
NO.
A CAREER CHANGE?
TAP TAP
TAP TAP
TAP TAP
TAP TAP
UH-OH... MONSTERS!
WORSE! IT'S ONE BIG ONE!
I'LL HANDLE THIS!
IT DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST BIGBY'S CATS CRADLE OF DOOM!
TWO ROLLS OF DUCT TAPE LATER...
WHAT AN EVIL PLACE!
CHECK OUT THE BONES!
THIS DOOR MUST LEAD TO SOMETHING COOL!
GANGWAY!
I WONDER IF THAT WAS A GOOD IDEA.
I WONDER WHY HE DIDN'T PUSH ME IN FIRST!
KA-POOF!

NOT ONE WORD, NODWICK!
NO PROBLEM, "XENA."
YOU KNOW, YOU REALLY BROUGHT THAT UPON YOURSELF.
PATCH HIM UP QUICK, PIFFANY! WE'VE GOT MORE TOMB TO TREAD!
INDEED, MORE TOMB AWAITED. THE WAY WAS HARD...
OUR HEROES FOUGHT AND TAPED UP NODWICK VALIANTLY, UNTIL...
THE CRYPT! LOOT-A-RAMA!
THIS HAD BETTER BE ENOUGH CASH TO GET MY CHEST HAIRS BACK, ARTAX!
I FIGURE I'VE DIED TWENTY-SEVEN TIMES TODAY. IS THAT A RECORD?
COOL! THIS WILL LOOK TOTALLY SAVAGE WELDED TO A HELMET!
HMM... THIS HAS "NO SAVING THROW" WRITTEN ALL OVER IT.
AND HOW LONG WILL I HAVE TO SIT HERE?
WELL, WE NEED TO BUY SOME HEAVY FIRE-POWER TO KILL IT.
PLUS, WE'LL USE MOST OF THIS TREASURE TO RE-MASCULATE ME. IT MAY BE A FEW WEEKS.
BE STRONG. WE'LL BE BACK TO SAVE YOU!
MUCH LATER...
AT LEAST YOU HAVE AN AFTERLIFE! IF YOU REALLY WANTED TO LIVE FOREVER, YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN A HENCHMAN!
I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT, BUT I HAD TOO MUCH SELF-ESTEEM.
OH, AND THANKS FOR BUILDING ALL OF THOSE MARVELOUS TRAPS! I DON'T THINK I MISSED A SINGLE ONE.
WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M JUST NOT A PEOPLE PERSON. BESIDES, "TOMB DEPOT" HAD A SALE...
END?

THE BLACK DEATH
Voaraghamanthar

WARNING: Unless you're the DM, play "Eye of Myrkul" by Eric L. Boyd (in issue #73 of *DUNGEON® Adventures*) *before* reading this article. In the adventure are details of current conditions in the Mere and much relevant magic mentioned only briefly herein.

by
Ed Greenwood

illustrated by
Storn Cook

IN THE HEART OF THE MERE OF DEAD MEN, THE VAST saltwater swamp that lies along the Sword Coast between Leilon and Waterdeep, dwells the savage black dragon Voaraghamanthar, the "Black Death." This wyrm is said to have strange powers and tends to avoid other dragons who intrude into the swamp or claim it as part of their domain. Most tales say the Black Death can burst from beneath long-placid swamp waters, read and reason intelligently, and be in two places at once.

This latter power is due to the true nature of this dragon: "Voaraghamanthar" is, in fact, two identical twin, adult male, black dragons who pose as one dragon in their dealings with both intruders and allies, a Cult of the Dragon cell based in Leilon. Their actual names are Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor (who impishly styles himself "the Rapacious Raider"), but they address each other by the short-names "Weszlum" and "Wulzour," respectively, when they speak at all. The twins share an empathic link and work together with unshakable loyalty.

Faerûn, however, knows of only one deadly, legendary Wyrm of the Mere: a flitting black ghost of claws and jaws that strikes out of nowhere. The black swamp waters hide the dragons and the rotting bodies of victims they wait to dine upon—or keep prisoner, helpless in the cold muck, for fell purposes.

The Mere of Dead Men

Twisted trees, vines, and thick vegetation cloak the mist-shrouded surface of the cold saltwater swamp. Its air is foul with rotting stenches, its water black and opaque. Visibility, given fogs and rolling topography, is rarely more than half a mile.

For flightless creatures, travel in the Mere is slow and dangerous. Its dark waters are deep enough to permit a flat-bottomed skiff to pass, but many small islands rise from the swamp—islands tangled with strange vegetation. The overgrown bones of long-fallen creatures lie everywhere. Quicksand is rare but mud all too common. Given the thick growth and frequent need to wade (and flounder), skiff-borne travelers can cover about 8 miles in ten hours.

The Mere of Dead Men is known for its monstrous denizens. Travelers on the High Road skirting its eastern verges often travel for three days and nights without stopping, to avoid camping within reach of "dark, wet, clutching things raiding out of the swamp." Bobbing will o' wisps are common night sights from the road. Sword Coast lore speaks vividly of floating islands moving in the Mere, lizard men commanded by liches, a penanggalan of monstrous size, drowned ships swarming with sea zombies, gigantic darktentacles, yuan-ti

slavers, temples to inhuman gods, giant leeches with bullywug riders, a huge will o' wisp that pulses with dark energy, and many other horrors.

Monsters proven (by adventurers' kills) to dwell in the Mere include aballin, alguduir, behirs, bichir, bullywugs, crimson deaths, flying fangs, giant frogs, gibbering mouthers, gulguthydrae, giant leeches, giant lizards, hydrae, lizard men, meazels, muckdwellers, mudmen, nyths, scrags, sewerms, shambling mounds, skuz, slithermorphs, snakes, thessalhydrae, thessalmera, giant toads, will o' wisps, and xantravars.

The taint of Myrkul's power recently animated many of the dead drowned beneath the western Mere, creating a profusion of night riders, gaunts, and many sorts of ghouls, skeletons, and zombies—now found in groups wandering the swamp and the lands around, attacking everyone they encounter.

Mere History

In the Year of the Shattered Scepter (614 DR), orc hordes attacked the realm of Phalorm and defeated its armies. A year later, the orcs besieged a rallied remnant of Phalorm's defenders at Iniarv's Tower, onetime abode of the long-vanished Mage Royal of Uthtower. The battle disturbed and enraged Iniarv (who'd become a lich and retreated into the tower's crypts).

Iniarv hurled mighty spells against his arousers, but the seemingly endless orcs soon invaded long-sheltered Uthtower. A desperate King Uth VII beseeched the lich to honor his ancient alliance with Uthtower and destroy the invading orcs. With cruel humor, Iniarv honored the request by unleashing titanic spells that caused the ocean to rise and inundate the land, drowning humans, demihumans, and orcs alike. When the waters receded, a sprawling saltwater mere lay in place of hitherto verdant realms. (Recent scholars believe the Curse of Iniarv was a powerful *wish* that magically bound the eastern border of the Mere to the High Road—ensuring its expansion whenever the road is rerouted.)

The few human and demihuman survivors fled. The orcs retreated to the Sword Mountains, where centuries later their descendants founded the realm of Uruth Ukrypt. Phalorm soon collapsed when the elves of Ardeep withdrew from it, to be replaced in the Year of the Ensorceled Kings (616 DR) by Delimbiyran, the Kingdom of Man.

The black wyrm disarms an unworthy foe.

Over the centuries, the Mere of Dead Men grew ever larger, inundating all land between the sea and the High Road no matter how far the road was moved inland. Attempts to resettle the former Uthtower uplands were thwarted by the greedy waters of the Mere time and again. Former routes of the High Road are marked by such flooded sites

as Castle Naerytar, Holk House, Mornhaven Towers, and Wolfhill House.

From its creation, the Mere harbored all manner of monsters, both living and undead—captured beasts and monstrous experiments released by Iniarv among them—and so was largely avoided by civilized beings. The first dragon to settle in the Mere was Chardansearavitriol, "Ebondeath" to the Fair Folk, an old male black dragon who seized the crumbling ruins of the Uthtower and its catacombs as his lair in the Year of the Lone Lark (631 DR).

Over the centuries, Chardansearavitriol ruled the Mere, preying primarily on Sword Mountain orcs. In the Year of the Spouting Fish (922 DR), he vanished, giving rise to tales that he'd died, relocated, or withdrawn into seclusion in the heart of the swamp.

The dragon had actually heeded the entreaties of Strongor Bonebag, a charismatic Priest of Myrkul with ties to the Cult of the Dragon, and been transformed into a dracolich. The Cult cell headed by Strongor had its own interpretations of the teachings of Myrkul and Sammaster; Strongor blended the tenets of both into a dark creed that venerated the Sacred Ones as divine servants of the Lord of Bones, who would one day undergo apotheosis. There would come a time, Strongor preached, when Myrkul would absorb all Toril into his realm. On that day, the gods of the living would be swept away by the claws of the rightful gods: an ascending pantheon of dracolich powers.

To serve the faithful during the long years until Myrkul's triumph, the Uthtower (Chardansearavitriol's lair, almost sixty miles west of Iniarv's Tower) was transformed into the Mausoleum of the Ebondeath, a great temple of stone and scoured bone wherein the Ebondeath Sect could dwell while venerating their god-to-be.

Strongor's sudden death less than a decade later ended his efforts to extend the sect across the North, but his followers held to his teachings. Ebondeath, who cared more for gaining personal power than for Strongor's vision, was slavishly served by the cultists (each of whom, upon death, was transformed into an undead servitor by his fellows). Chardansearavitriol's isolation from wider Faerûn was deepened by the emergence of the orc realm of Uruth Ukrypt circa 930 DR and the subsequent collapse of trade along the High Road. (The end of the dragon's raiding had allowed the orc population to soar and the followers of Uruth to establish their own kingdom.)

Over time, Ebondeath became mere legend. When Uruth Ukrypt fell in the Year of Crimson Magics (1026 DR), his name and deeds were largely forgotten. For nearly two centuries Chardansearavitriol slumbered in the heart of the Mere, venerated by his cult, rousing himself only to defend his domain against intruders. This drowsy existence ended abruptly in the Year of the Dragon Altar (1202 DR).

The power of Myrkul, the Lord of Bones, waxes when the Eye of Myrkul appears in the night sky. This rare celestial event involves the passage of a new moon through a certain ring of seven stars otherwise associated with an old symbol of Mystra. Under the Eye's baleful glare, Chardansearavitriol's body collapsed into a heap of bones and drifting dust atop the altar of Myrkul. (Ebondeath survived as a spirit tethered to his physical remains and might linger in that same state today.)

The remaining cultists hailed Ebondeath's sudden transformation as the long-heralded second stage of divine ascension Strongor had foretold. Worshipers of Myrkul flocked to the temple at the heart of the Mere, and the Ebondeath Sect grew strong, awaiting the night when once again the Eye of Myrkul would grace the sky. Over the years, Sect members prepared for the next stage of Chardansearavitriol's ascension, in accordance with a series of visions unveiled to their highest-ranking priests by the Lord of Bones. In particular, the cultists worked to create *rings of Myrkul*, unholy items the Reaper said would be needed in years to come.

However, the Sect collapsed when Myrkul perished in the Time of Troubles, and the Mausoleum sank into the swamp. Fleeing Myrkulytes yielded their lives—and magical *rings*—to the monsters of the Mere.

Upon Myrkul's death, the god's avatar exploded high above the Sea of Swords. Much of his might rained down on the waters to slowly collect on the sea floor, and the god's essence survives in the Crown of Horns (currently thought to be in subterranean Skullport, beneath Waterdeep), but a small fraction of the god's power coalesced atop the waves. This floating patch of bone dust drifted north, and—perhaps by chance, perhaps by dark design—recently entered the Mere, where Myrkul's fading power animated a leaderless legion of undead from the countless fallen bodies that lie unburied beneath the dark waters. These "risen dead" displaced many swamp monsters, who've taken to raiding the lands around. Some of the "risen" are Myrkulytes who fled the sinking Mausoleum, and many of the *rings of Myrkul* they bore have passed into the possession of others.

Those others included the leaders of the Dragon Cult cell in Leilon, who remembered legends about the Mausoleum. They commanded their agents to search for the sunken temple and its dracolich and induced Voaraghamanthar (a black dragon whose settlement in the Mere had greatly worried the cultists but who fortunately seemed approachable) to assist in the search.

Voaraghamanthar gave his aid in exchange for the promise of much treasure and many magical items, including the Twinned Crown of Yarlith (an enchanted crown created by Iniarv in 191 DR and recently discovered by Cult members exploring flooded Mere ruins), which was given to the dragon to seal the bargain.

The Black Brothers

Unknown to the Cult, Voaraghamanthar has an identical twin, Waervaerendor. The brothers have long pretended to be a single being (using only Voaraghamanthar's name in "public"), as this deception provides them with a powerful weapon against foes who think they face but a single dragon.

The Black Brothers were born in a large clutch of eggs in the Mhair jungles. Draconic twins are rare indeed (one typically kills the other in the egg before hatching), but Voaraghamanthar and

Waervaerendor share an empathic link that bonds them into an unshakable team. Together the hatchling twins slew their siblings and fled before their parents could in turn destroy them. After many years of lurking in swamps and moors throughout Faerûn, the Brothers found a "home" they deemed fitting and took the Mere of Dead Men as their domain.

The twins were attracted by its isolation (far from traditional black dragon haunts, making lair-challengers fewer) and its legends of lost magic and treasure: the hoard of Chardansearavitriol and the treasuries of flooded Uthtower and other realms. Writings about treasures lost in the Mere found in tombs they plundered described the Twin Crowns of Myrmoran, reputed to have enhanced the empathic bond between the fraternal monarchs of Uthtower and Yarlith and afforded them magical powers. The Brothers saw no reason such powers shouldn't benefit them.

The twins have long striven to increase their power by acquiring magic, specifically spells leading to a means of creating loyal, formidable servitor creatures to serve them as warriors, guardians, and drudges.

Like most dragons beyond youth, thoughts of their own deaths weigh ever more heavily on the brothers, and they've begun—earlier in life than many wyrms—to seek immortality energetically. They share the fear that the death of one of them might render the other insane through their empathic link.

Both brothers see undeath (dracolichdom) as a fool's road, doomed to fall shy of immortality and unworthy of consideration. Nevertheless, when approached by the Dragon Cult, they forged an alliance in hopes of gaining lore amid the details of dracolichdom that might provide a means of prolonging their lives and preserving their (living, vigorous) bodies. Cultists are also "useful tools" to spy and work for the twins outside the Mere. They still pretend to be tempted by dracolichdom but are completely insincere about the alliance (and suspect the followers of the Scaly Way are no more true).

On their own, the brothers unearthed a collection of dark sermons probably written by Strongor Bonebag. Reading these sermons (which they've kept secret from the Cult), they've come to believe Chardansearavitriol underwent a process different from that which the Cult uses to create most dracoliches. They also believe the Twinned Crown of Uthtower, second of the Twin Crowns of Myrmoran, still lies in the Uthtower. Once each brother wears a crown, they presume, they'll command great powers not evident while they have only the Yarlith coronet. Seeking to win both the second crown and Ebondeath's bones without damaging their Cult alliance, the Brothers hope to sway adventurers entering the Mere into securing both for them. Waervaerendor destroyed a Helmite base in ruined Iniarv's Tower and took captives; the brothers intend to bargain their lives for the things they want retrieved—before the Dragon Cult recovers these treasures. The dragon, calling himself Voaraghamanthar, keeps the Cult's interest and his brother's existence secret from adventurers he bargains with.

Encountering The Wyrm of the Mere

The Black Brothers see most creatures as food or annoyances to be dealt with efficiently. The exceptions are dragons and heroes (whom they view as "tools too useful to be destroyed out of hand"). The brothers lurk underwater when other dragons are near—not out of fear but to conceal the fact that they are twins, and because they have utterly no interest in disputes with other dragons … unless they try to settle in the Mere.

If heroes approach, Voaraghamanthar typically withdraws, alerting his brother. Waervaerendor habitually shadows and observes them, remaining hidden thanks to his *ring of invisibility*. Against large groups or formidable foes, Waervaerendor might also employ *dust of disappearance* for an opportunity to observe the intruders thoroughly, seeking magic and inobvious weapons and abilities.

Once future minions or meals are assessed, Waervaerendor reveals himself in a manner that terrifies and heightens his negotiating advantage. The dragon has a flair for cruel dramatics. If he knows

intruders have previously triggered an *Iniarv's unseen voice* in the ruins of Iniarv's Tower, he positions himself behind them and softly asks (mimicking the lich's voice), "Now where did I hide that dragon?" Alternatively, he might circle adventurers on muddy ground, creating footprints that appear "out of thin air."

Once he's made his presence known, Waervaerendor tries to negotiate a deal for the heroes' service. Depending on their reactions, he might or might not become visible, calling himself by his brother's name to sow confusion. Though not easily provoked, Waervaerendor realistically fakes emotional reactions to enhance his negotiating position. The Wyrm of the Mere is ever alert for treachery, fully expecting others to act as he would and preparing accordingly. He's malicious, conniving, and unscrupulous, employing any tactic that gives him an advantage. Voaraghamanthar's disposition is similar, and he is always close enough to render aid when needed.

If negotiations completely fail to gain him an edge, Waervaerendor fights without hesitation, but—after demonstrating the folly of fighting him—tries to resume negotiations. If adventurers don't attack but refuse any deal, the dragon observes aloud that those who do not serve him are simply prey, then proceeds to treat them accordingly until they are defeated or offer to negotiate.

The brothers' objectives are to induce adventurers to find and retrieve treasures: enchanted items and books of magic outside the Mere; valuables submerged in the swamp (magic of the flooded, fallen kingdoms in particular); and what the Mausoleum holds—the bones of Chardansearavitriol and Ebondeath's hoard. The dragons avoid explaining why they want these things. If pressed for guarantees, Waervaerendor gives his word as bond and acts insulted if more is desired. (If pressed, he'll swear an oath to do as agreed or forfeit his entire hoard to Task, the draconic power of greed and selfishness—but he will expect the adventurers to swear similar behavior-binding oaths invoking their own gods.)

The brothers typically bury creatures slain for food and battle captives in the underwater mud at the heart of the Mere, far from prying eyes. The former are left to rot (for such is the favorite fare of black dragons); the latter are stored for use as decoys and bargaining tools. Captives are stripped of magic, armor, and weapons; bound, forced to ingest *air spores* (which typically grant 2d4 days of air each; see the *Tome of Magic*); and buried in the muck.

Black Claws Up Close

Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor have scales dulling with age (useful in "disappearing" amid swamp growth), cast spells at 11th level, and can each communicate with any intelligent creature. Their empathic link allows unfettered mental communication only when they're within sight of each other but always permits them to sense each other's emotions. They've developed enough control to convey simple prearranged messages (danger, food, treasure, yes, no, come, stay away) by mental "flavor."

Both wyrms are experienced in battle, prefer to study opponents beforehand, and like to begin a fray with a clawing, biting pounce, thereafter breathing as often as possible, kicking and tail-slapping as opportunities arise. Each flees if brought to fewer than half hit points. If the other brother is close, either twin tries to entice foes into reach of his sibling's breath weapon.

The brothers prefer aquatic combat to aerial or dry-land fighting and are well versed in drowning foes by beating opponents down into the mire with their wings and "pinning" them under the water. Both dragons are also comfortable fighting perched on stony heights, employing *spider climb* when needed.

When battling another wyrm in the skies, either brother employs his breath weapon to damage a foe's wings, then draws the enemy into the nearest swamp or open water. In water, the brothers use wing buffets to drive huge sprays of (preferably previously *corrupted*) water at foes. Black wisps of "smoke" dance briefly over water they corrupt; thereafter, it is oily, resisting currents that would otherwise dissipate the corruption. Animal life dies or departs the stagnant foulness, and trees whose roots drink of it begin to rot. Any creature consuming tainted water, or contacting it with an open wound, suffers 1d6 + 4 points of damage and is 70% likely to be afflicted with a disease. Waervaerendor wears *rings of invisibility* and *mind shielding*. In a small pouch strapped to his left rear leg he carries three packets of *dust of disappearance*, six doses of *air spores*, and a *portable hole* (used to ferry treasure and prisoners).

On his left rear claw, Voaraghamanthar wears the Twinned Crown of Yarlith and a *ring of wizardry* that doubles 1st-level Wizard spells. On his right rear claw is a *ring of fire resistance*. He habitually casts *shield* before combat and uses *taunt* to draw foes from cover. Outdoors, Voaraghamanthar uses an *enlarge* spell to amplify his threatening appearance and the effectiveness of his attacks. He resorts to *reduce* only when he must enter a structure or cavern complex not large enough to accommodate his bulk, which he's therefore reluctant to do.

The brothers resent intrusions into their affairs or domain. When they let self-control slip, they fight with unbridled fury. Cunning and amoral, they're never needlessly cruel or destructive. They've little interest in displays of power or acquiring territory, considering discretion the better part of valor and their lives more important than victory.

Waervaerendor is more outgoing, preferring to acquire information face-to-face, while Voaraghamanthar prefers to study and deduce from dusty tomes and ancient ruins. Waervaerendor relishes the hunt more than his twin and is more apt to tackle difficult quarry for the challenge. Both brothers are practiced actors, can read and reason, and thirst for magical knowledge.

Ed Greenwood created the FORGOTTEN REALMS *setting but freely admits he doesn't know its every corner as well as some avid delvers into things Realmsian. In this case, Eric Boyd did a truckload of work on the Black Brothers, George Krashos knew where the bodies were buried, and Chris Perkins left fingerprints at the scene.*

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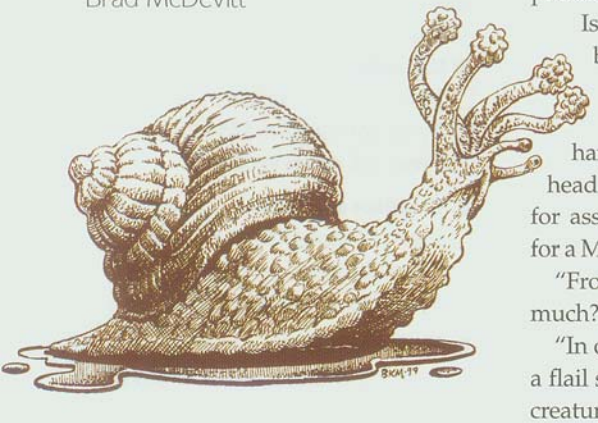
THE ECOLOGY OF THE FLAIL SNAIL

The Price of Flailure

Never forget that the Monster Hunters Association doesn't work for free.

by Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by Brad McDevitt



DREELIX PICKED UP THE GAVEL AND HELD IT BEFORE HIM. He stared at it lovingly for a moment, then, almost ritually, banged it down on the table before him—once, twice, three times—and said the words that drew the attention of all the wizards and sages in the meeting hall.

"This meeting of the Monster Hunters Association is hereby opened," he intoned.

"It seems we have a rather heavy agenda tonight," he continued. "After Grindle briefs us on the pathetic state of our coffers, we'll have an update on the problems with Zantoullios' latest batch of healing potions, something about a fewunexpected and unpleasant side effects"—here he fixed a stern look at the gangly wizard, who swallowed hard and grinned sickly—"followed by Willowquisp's report, or lack thereof, of useful flumph by-products." The elderly sage pursed his lips and looked at the ceiling, but said nothing. Dreelix continued: "Then, let's see, Old Gumphrey has a pitch for some new alchemical paraphernalia he thinks we need to purchase. Is there anything else? If not, let's begin with—"

"Actually, there is something else," said Buntleby, raising his hand and standing up to address the head table. "I have received a request for assistance; in effect, an opportunity for a Monster Hunt presents itself."

"From who? What monster? How much?" fired off Dreelix.

"In order: the gnomes of Wishbottom, a flail snail, and the remains of the slain creature itself."

Dreelix harrumphed. "Another freebie," he scoffed.

"An opportunity to assist those requiring our help," corrected Buntleby. "Several gnomes working in the mines have already been slain. Think of it as a goodwill gesture."

"Goodwill gestures do nothing to fill our depleted coffers," grumbled Dreelix. Then, thinking aloud, he added, "I wonder if there are any magical uses to be had from a dead gnome?"

Buntleby stiffened, then said, "Perhaps you should put the question to Finklebintzer, the gnomish Mayor of Wishbottom." And turning to his side, he held his hand out to acknowledge the tiny gnome seated at his left.

Too late, Dreelix spotted the angry gnome and let out a high-pitched "Eep!" Then, standing to his unimpressive full height, he dressed down his colleague. "Buntleby! What's the meaning of this? Why'd you bring him in here without warning me? Are you trying to make the Association look bad?"

"No need; you seem to be quite capable of taking care of that yourself."

Dreelix fumed, then addressed the gnome. "Flitzenblinky, or whatever your

name is, please, allow me to explain ..." he began, and then proceeded to spout off a few words in an arcane language, waggling his fingers as he did so. A blank look fell across the gnome's face; Dreelix shouted "Hah!" in triumph and sat back down. It wasn't the first time a *forget* spell had saved his bacon.

Buntleby opened his mouth as if to protest, then gave a sigh of exasperation. He had expected little more from his exalted leader. He took his seat.

Dreelix waited until the blank look left the gnome's face, then resumed his opening speech. "... and Old Gumphrey has a pitch for some new alchemical paraphernalia he thinks we need to purchase. But first, I believe we have an honored guest in our midst! Buntleby, would you be so kind as to do the honors?"

Buntleby stood, gave a mental shrug, and pressed on: "Gentlemen—and Lady Ablasta—allow me to introduce Finklebintzer of Wishbottom; Finklebintzer, I present to you our fearless and generous leader Dreelix, to whom we must make our appeals."

"By all means!" agreed Dreelix, a wide, phony approximation of a smile on his face. "Our other business can wait; we are always happy to assist our neighboring communities! Please, tell us of this monster that has been troubling you, and we will decide how best to rid you of it."

The little gnome stood up on his chair and, now at an appropriate height for public speaking, began his plea in a high-pitched, squeaky voice. "Fame of your illustrious organization has spread even to our little corner of the world, so we turn to you for aid. Our mine was recently invaded by a hideous, giant brute of a snail whose flailing appendages have caused the deaths of three of our miners. Brute strength has had no effect; we cannot win past its nasty tentacles to attack its soft body, and our hammers and chisels seem useless against the creature's hard shell when we attack from the rear.[1] We've tried throwing flaming brands at the beast, and, against my better judgment, even purchased a vial of poison from an unscrupulous type in an attempt to kill the thing—all to no avail.[2] We now turn to you in desperation, pleading for your assistance, for we fear to return to the mines that are our livelihood while the terrible creature stalks the tunnels and shafts."

"A sad story, indeed," agreed Dreelix, putting on his equally fake sad-face. "Have you tried magic?"

"We are a small mining village," said Finklebintzer, "with no great wizards among us. My cousin Whigglesponker knows a few illusion spells and tried scaring off the creature with them, but these, too, had no great effect."[3]

"A pity," commiserated Dreelix, sticking out his lower lip in a pout meant to demonstrate his sensitivity to the gnome's plight. "Well, we thank you for your time. Rest assured that we will study up on the creature to determine how best to destroy it for you. You may return to your village with the happy news that the Monster Hunters will be there in but a few short days."

Buntleby stood again. "Willowquisp and I have taken the liberty of researching the creature; we are prepared to brief the Association on our notes, findings, and suggested strategies." Willowquisp the Zoophile, an elderly sage fascinated by the wide variety of creatures inhabiting the planet—even (some might say especially) the goofy-looking ones—nodded to his younger friend and stood, a book full of hastily-scribbled notes at the ready.

Dreelix's face went taut with anger. He mentally reached for another *forget* spell to use on the gnome; finding none remaining, he gritted his teeth and forced his phony happy-face back on (a hideous rictus of muscular tweakings that pulled his mouth into a grotesque and unfamiliar semblance of a smile), making a mental note that from now on he'd have to carry more *forget* spells in his spell inventory. Or better yet, assign Grindle to guard the door and prevent unauthorized guests from entering official Association meetings. At nearly three hundred pounds, Grindle could be intimidating when he wanted to be—and his body odor was intimidating even when he wasn't.

"All right," Dreelix said through gritted teeth. "Let's hear what you two have come up with."

"Thank you," said Buntleby, grabbing Willowquisp by the arm and leading him to the podium on Dreelix's left before the Association president figured out a way to weasel out of the offer.

Willowquisp settled his book of notes upon the podium as Buntleby started their presentation. "The flail snail is a land-based gastropod, different from the standard garden snail in its unusual size, the magical properties of its shell, and the addition of its multiple flailing appendages.[4] We'll address each of these differences in turn."

Willowquisp spoke up. "The flail snail averages about eight feet tall, the highest point being of course the crown of the shell. They are only about ten inches tall when newly-hatched,[5] although they grow quickly, reaching full size within four years. The creatures have a life span of about twenty years."

1. Although the creatures move at a slow speed of 3, flail snails can whip their bodies (or parts thereof) into their shells with astounding quickness. Attacks upon a flail snail's soft body are therefore made against Armor Class –8.

2. Flail snails are immune to both fire and poison. Fire damage is negated both by the creature's thick shell and the layer of wet, protective mucus that covers the snail's exposed skin. As for poison, the flail snail has such a slow metabolism that any poison is negated by natural antitoxins in its blood before it has a chance to affect the creature.

3. The vision of a flail snail is limited. It has two small sensory appendages, one on each side of its head. The sensory appendages allow the creature to detect movement and differentiate between light and dark at a range of 20 feet, but that's about it. Thus, the creatures are immune to most vision-based illusions, although a *light* or *continual light* spell cast upon a flail snail's sensory appendages blinds it. However, a "blind" flail snail can still detect movement, as that sense is based upon the detection of air currents more so than the use of vision. "Blind" flail snails therefore suffer only a –1 to their attack rolls and no penalty to Armor Class.

The sensory appendages also house the creature's olfactory organs. Flail snails have a highly-developed sense of smell.

4. A flail snail has 4–6 clublike appendages growing from the front of its head, between its smaller sensory appendages. Each of these has a 10-lb. tip of hardened flesh covered with many knobby protrusions (not pointed spikes, with which the creature is often depicted in illustrations—spikes would easily rip through the creature's soft flesh when it pulled its head into its shell). These club tentacles are in constant motion, swaying slowly back and forth when the creature is calm and at increased speeds when agitated. The tentacles are the flail snail's only means of active attack, each causing 1d8 points of damage. In addition, they can smash through a 1"-thick piece of wood—thus, most wooden shields must make a successful saving throw vs. crushing blow or be destroyed when struck by a flail snail tentacle.

5. The flail snail entry in *Monstrous Compendium® 5: Greyhawk Adventures* (under "Snail") erroneously states that flail snails give live birth to 1–3 young. It also refers to them as "silicon-based" gastropods and makes reference to flail snail "females" and "mothers."

Flail snails, like most land-dwelling snails, are hermaphroditic, each creature manufacturing both eggs and sperm cells. They reproduce by exchanging packets of sperm cells with another partner through

"As for the creature's shell," added Buntleby, "it has a number of unusual properties. First of all, it is garishly colored, a swirling conglomeration of bright blues, reds, greens, and yellows—rather like someone let a few drunken leprechauns loose in a paint shop. Second, and most important, the shell is highly magical, reflecting, negating, or distorting magical spells directed at the creature. It is perhaps for this reason that your cousin's illusion spells were ineffective toward the beast," he added to Finklebintzer. The gnome raised his eyebrows and nodded.

"A study was once done on the magical properties of the flail snail's shell," supplied Willowquisp, consulting his notes. "A wizard by the name of Gallingrave, some two centuries ago, intrigued by the variable nature of spell effects when centered on the creature, attached a *brooch of shielding* to his robes, scrounged up a *wand of magic missiles,* and repeatedly shot missile after missile at the snail, recording each result.

"Some of the missiles found their target, while some were reflected directly back at Gallingrave. Occasionally, the *wand* discharged no missile at all, or, when it did, the magic was distorted, firing only a harmless beam of light or sending the missile darting off in a random direction.[6] From Gallingrave's recorded notes, we can gather that there is only about a 30% chance of successfully attacking a flail snail with magic—not a very promising figure."

"Finally, there are the flailing appendages themselves, from which the creature gets its name," said Buntleby. "Each snail begins life with four to six appendages, and, much like the number of limbs on an osquip, the number of flails on a flail snail seems to have no correlation with the number of flails of either of its parents."

"All very fascinating," remarked Dreelix dryly. "How do we kill it?"

"Several methods suggest themselves," answered Buntleby. "We could simply hire some skilled men-at-arms to attack the thing. With better armor and weapons than the gnomish miners had available, and if the warriors concentrate on attacking the creature's flails,[7] the creature could no doubt easily be dispatched."

"No good!" piped up Grindle the Coin-Counter. "Our funds are low; I would have to vote against any plan causing further expenditures."

"I agree," added Dreelix. "I'd rather not spend money when there are no doubt alternative solutions available. Plus, you know how I feel about warriors: overvalued lunkheads with more muscle than brains! Any dolt can pick up a sword and wave it around; it takes great skill and mental fortitude to master the wizardly arts!" Dreelix ground his teeth at the thought of warriors. One particular memory came rushing forward, as it always did: being kicked out of Sir Scromblatt's School for Young Knights in Training as a lad. "'Total lack of aptitude in the warrior arts,' my foot," he mumbled to himself, scowling and waving a clenched fist in the air. "Ha! They were just jealous, the lot of them! And the same goes for those fools at Master Micklebie's Junior Warriors—'new levels of ineptitude,' was it? Well, who's laughing now, huh? Who's laughing now?"

There was silence in the meeting hall as the Monster Hunters looked on in embarrassed silence. With a start, Dreelix realized that he'd been speaking aloud.

"Very well then," said Willowquisp, breaking the awkward silence as if nothing had happened. "Another approach: flail snails must keep their soft bodies moist. During hot, dry weather, they undergo a hibernation-like process called estivation, where they seal themselves into their shells with a plug of hardened mucus[8], leaving only a small air hole. While sealed up, they slow down their body processes, and can survive for months without food or water."[9]

"How does this help us?" asked Dreelix.

"What exactly do flail snails eat, anyway?" asked Spontayne at the same time.

---

the genital pore, a small opening near the creature's head. After mating is complete, each snail goes its own way, and the two might never meet again. After about one month, each lays a dozen or so eggs under rocks or in small crevices. Of these, usually 1–3 hatch into baby flail snails.

The young gastropods eat their own egg shells after hatching and are then cared for by the parent for the next two years—until their club-tentacles reach a weight of five pounds or so. At that point, they go off on their own, confident in their ability to survive. These half-grown snails inflict 1d6 points damage with their flailing appendages.

6. A flail snail's magical shell protects it from all magical energy directed at it—even spells that can be "targeted" at body parts other than the shell, like *magic missile.* Whenever a spell (or spell-like effect from a magical item) is cast at a flail snail, the following results occur (roll d%):

1d100	Result
01–40	Spell malfunction
41–70	Spell functions normally
71–90	Spell fails to function at all, but is expended
91–00	Spell is reflected back at the caster

Spell malfunctions are usually only slight variations of the standard spell effects, affecting the creature nearest to the snail at the time of the casting. If no other creatures are nearby (within the spell's area of effect), the spell is centered on a point near the snail (consult Table 45: Grenade-Like Missile Effects in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*).

Note that the shell affects only magic cast directly at the flail snail; it wouldn't prevent the creature from being crushed by a *wall of iron* that was created next to the snail and then tipped over onto it, for instance. Also, when a spell is cast successfully on a flail snail, the snail is still granted any normal saving throws permitted by the spell.

The shell constantly expands as the snail itself grows, with new shell material being added at the base, where the creature's head emerges. The shells can either grow clockwise or counter-clockwise; those growing clockwise are called "dextral" shells, while those growing in the other direction are called "sinistral." The direction of the spiral has no effect on the shell's powers.

7. Combat with a flail snail is handled differently than with most other monsters. Each of the snail's flailing appendages has 1 Hit Die and is treated as a separate creature. Flail snails attack as creatures with as many Hit Dice as they have active tentacles; a snail with five tentacles therefore attacks as a 5-HD creature, with a THAC0 of 15. When a tentacle is reduced to 0 hit points it is useless (if attacked with a bladed weapon, the tentacle is usually assumed to have been severed) and the flail snail drops one Hit Die in power. Once all tentacles have been destroyed, the flail snail withdraws into its shell and utters the most pitiful cries imaginable until it dies some 1–3 turns later. These cries have a 50% chance of attracting wandering monsters. The flail snail's death-wails are the only time it vocalizes—it is otherwise completely silent throughout its life.

The flail snail's body has hit points equal to the total of all of the tentacles, but it is protected by the thick shell and thus has an AC of –8. For purposes of combat, the shell itself is impervious to weapons.

Thus, when fighting a flail snail, two approaches can be taken. One can either hope to slowly hack away at the creature's well-protected body or face off against the flails themselves and take them out one by one. When hacking at tentacles, a PC need only hit AC 4. If successful, the player rolls a d6 or d4 (as appropriate) to determine which active tentacle was hit, rolls for damage, and the DM determines if the tentacle is still "alive" after the attack. If not, the flail snail drops by one Hit Die (affecting the creature's THAC0 and number of attacks in following rounds). In this way, a Warrior with 18/00 Strength and weapon specialization can't take out several tentacles with one stroke just because he caused 16 points of damage with his broadsword.

8. A flail snail's slimy mucus is produced by a gland at the front of its single foot. The mucus has several uses: Besides acting as a protective coating for the creature's skin (protecting it from fire and preventing it from drying out), it is necessary as a locomotive lubricant, without which the creature cannot move. Flail snails leave mucus trails behind as they move, making it easy to track them (at least, until the mucus dries and evaporates).

9. Like most land snails, flail snails living on or near the surface also estivate during the winter months. This is usually in response not to the air temperature but rather to the vegetation—or lack

Willowquisp chose to answer Spontayne's question. "Flail snails mostly eat lichen and algae that grows on the floors of dungeons, mines, and other underground areas. They scrape these substances up using an organ in their mouth called a radula—in effect, a long, flat tongue with numerous tiny, sharp teeth laid out in rows like a file."

"How does this help us?" repeated Dreelix with irritation in his voice.

"Hmm? Oh, the estivation," said Willowquisp. "It appears to me that some spell could be used to alter the temperature and humidity of the mine, forcing the snail into a state of estivation. Then we could lug the creature out of the mine and kill it at our leisure."

"What spell did you have in mind?" Dreelix wanted to know.

"I don't know. I leave that kind of thing up to you wizards."

"I personally have nothing in my spellbooks that can help us there," offered Zantoullios.

"Nor I," admitted Spontayne.

"Me neither," said Buntleby. "However, I believe there is a priestly spell, *control temperature* or something, that could help us. Perhaps if we contacted Delbert the druid ..."

"Absolutely not!" Dreelix exploded. "We don't need that greedy fool's help! The last time he charged us two silver scimitars to cast a lousy *locate animals or plants* spell, then upped his price to four after Grindle and Zantoullios bungled the first Shambler Hunt and we needed another spell!" Both Grindle and Zantoullios exchanged looks: neither remembered the fault having been theirs. Zantoullios shrugged; he was used to being blamed for things out of his control—like those healing potions he had whipped up. So they caused the imbiber's skin to turn green and warty for a few hours; they still worked, didn't they? He made a mental note to ease off on the powdered troll's blood for the next batch.

"Anyway," sputtered Dreelix, "I thought we agreed we weren't spending any money on this!" It was obvious that he was getting excited, for his face was becoming red and he was beginning to spray spittle as he spoke. Spontayne wiped an eye and vowed to sit in the back next time.

"Another approach then," suggested Willowquisp. "The creatures shun bright light;[10] perhaps we could drive it out of the mines with *continual light* spells or something similar."

"Why don't we just throw salt on the thing and be done with it?" asked Old Gumphrey. "I used to pour salt on slugs and snails all the time as a youth. Shriveled 'em up real good, it did!" he cackled.

"The problem there is the amount of salt required," replied Willowquisp.[11]

"Well, how about this," offered Buntleby. "We wizards load ourselves up with as many *reduce* spells as we can, then take turns casting them on the snail. Eventually, we shrink the snail down small enough that we can carry him out of the mine in one of our pockets."

"I thought you said spells bounce off the creature's shell," said Dreelix, surprising everyone by proving he had been paying attention for once.

"Well, they do," Buntleby admitted, "or at least some of them will. But enough *reduce* spells thrown at the beast will do the job, eventually. No doubt we'll also shrink a few of us, but that's easily fixed with a *dispel magic* or two."

thereof—to be found in the winter months. Immediately before sealing themselves up in their shells, they go on a feeding binge, storing up as much food as they can for the long winter months. Of course, flail snails living deep underground do not usually seasonally estivate, as the seasons have little if any effect on the amount of vegetation to be found that far below the earth.

10. This is instinctual behavior, as the sun can dry out the mucus that coats the creature's moist body. Bright lights themselves have no debilitating effect on flail snails.

11. The flail snail's outer coating of mucus protects it somewhat from the drying effects of salt. However, a large enough dose (for instance, the contents of a small belt pouch) thrown at a flail snail inflicts 2d4 points of damage the first round and an additional 1d4 points of damage the second round. After that, the snail's increased mucus production negates any further such attacks. The salt must strike the snail's soft body to be effective, as the creature's hard shell is impervious to being dried out in this fashion.

"It's the best idea we've heard so far," suggested Spontayne.

"Hmmph!" said Dreelix, not convinced. "Let's move on. What can we expect to reap from our efforts in killing the beast?"

"Ah, there we have good news indeed!" said Buntleby. "The main value of the creature is, of course, its shell, which has a market value of about 5,000 gold pieces and a wide number of magical uses."

"The most obvious use of the shell is the creation of magical shields," said Willowquisp, consulting his notes. "Two shields can be made from a single shell, which not only offer excellent protection from weapons, but also carry the shell's magical protection from spells for a number of months."[12]

"Optionally, the shell can be ground down and made into a *robe of scintillating colors*," said Buntleby.

"How many *robes* per shell?" quizzed Dreelix, warming to the subject.

"Alas, only one."

"Grindle, current value of such a robe?"

"About 25,000 gold," answered Grindle, who kept hundreds of such values stored in his head—he wasn't called "the Coin-Counter" for nothing. There were numerous appreciative whistles at the value, one of them belonging to none other than Finklebintzer the gnome.

"Anything else?" demanded Dreelix.

"Optionally, the shell can be brewed into several *potions of rainbow hues*," submitted Willowquisp.

"Grindle?"

"A negligible sum, compared to the robe."

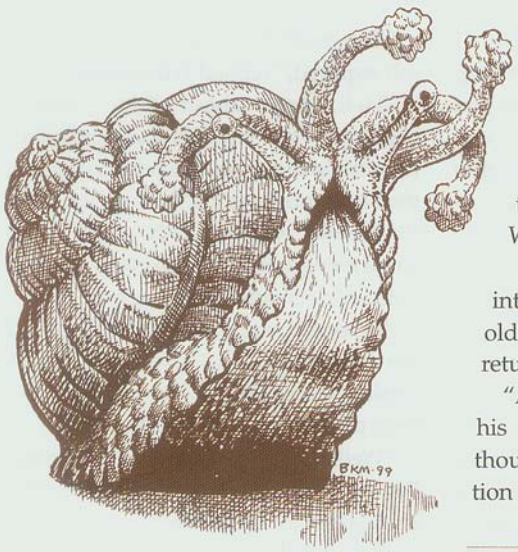
"I thought as much," replied Dreelix. "So then, anything else?" he asked to the two at the podium.

"It is believed that the creature's 'love darts' may be used in *philters of love*," said Buntleby.

"'Love darts?' What in the world is a love dart?"

"A small, sharp dart of shell-like material made in special sacs in the creature's body," answered Willowquisp. "You'd learn of things like this if you allowed us to brief fully, instead of concentrating only on combat and useful body parts. The flail snail mating ritual is really quite fascinating. First, the snails—"

"A subject for another time,"[13] interrupted Dreelix. "So, *philters of love*, huh? Okay, what else?"



"Nothing definite," admitted Buntleby. "Although given the creature's immunity to both fire and poison, it's possible that there are useful flail snail by-products that provide such protection as well.[14] That's all I've got. Willowquisp?"

"Nothing anybody here'd be interested in hearing," grumbled the old sage, packing up his notes and returning to his seat.

"All right, then," beamed Dreelix, his mood vastly improved by the thought of all the money the Association would soon be raking in. "We'll try that shrinking tactic of yours, I guess, Buntleby. All wizards able to cast the spells *reduce* and *dispel magic* will memorize them to capacity. We'll meet here tomorrow at first light. Any questions? No? Then thank you for bringing this to our attention, uh, Flinkyblinky, and rest assured, the monster is as good as dead. You may be excused from the rest of the meeting; we'll just be taking up other boring little bits of business, and you no doubt wish to be on your way ..."

"Actually, there is one final bit of business we need to discuss," replied the gnome.

"That being?"

"The sale of the flail snail. I have decided to withdraw our request for aid; instead, I now offer for sale a living flail snail, yours for the taking, for the small sum of 10,000 gold pieces, a price you will no doubt find very reasonable."

"WHAT?" roared Dreelix, as the audience members gasped in astonishment. "Ten thousand gold? What kind of a joke are you playing at?"

"No joke," replied the gnome. "You yourself said you stand to gain 25,000 pieces of gold from the magical robe you plan to make from the snail's shell; I see no reason why some of that money shouldn't be sent our way. We are, after all, a simple village of poor miners, and the sum will be put to good use. Plus, it's our snail, to do with as we wish, and we now wish to sell it."

"I thought the snail was a 'hideous, giant brute' and a 'terrible creature,'" pointed out Buntleby.

"After listening to your discussions, I have elevated it to the status of 'treasured pet.'"

"But what of your miners?" Buntleby continued. "Three have been killed so far; more deaths may occur."

"As has been pointed out, the crea-ture is essentially harmless—it killed only

12. These are *shields* +2 and provide protection from spells for 1–6 months in the same manner as the shell does for the living flail snail (40% chance of spell malfunction, 30% chance of it working normally, 20% chance of total negation, 10% chance the spell is reflected back at the spellcaster). Even after the spell-altering effects of the shield fade, it remains a *shield* +2.

13. Or, the subject of a footnote: Flail snails begin the mating ritual by slowly circling each other, then rubbing their heads and feet together. The love darts project from the creatures' bodies and stab into their partner, causing neither pain nor damage. Different snail species produce differently-shaped love darts, so it's very likely that this serves as a form of recognition for the two snails involved, to ensure that they're mating with an appropriate species (pretty embarrassing to have mated with the wrong species entirely, but we digress). It also stimulates the snails' bodies, preparing them for the act of mating. Flail snails cannot produce sperm cells without first having sampled their intended mate's love darts.

Hey, it works for them.

14. And there are: The stomach and liver of a flail snail, when ground up and mixed with flail snail blood, are valuable ingredients in an *elixir of health*, negating any previously-ingested poisons. Flail snail skin, along with a small coating of the mucus that normally covers it, when finely ground can be used in the creation of *potions of fire resistance*.

In addition, flail snail mucus, although not a standard ingredient, can be used to create *potions of climbing*. However, this thickens the potion so much that it takes two full rounds to imbibe (and does nothing to enhance the taste, to say the least).

those miners trying to kill it,"[15] responded Finklebintzer. "If we leave it alone, it should leave us alone. And I'm sure even we gnomes, with our stumpy little legs, can manage to outrun a snail, no matter how big!"

"This is preposterous!" thundered Dreelix. "Buntleby, I hold you personally responsible!"

"He's got a point, though," argued Buntleby. "I know we regularly exploit the creatures around us for their magical uses, but that doesn't mean we should similarly exploit those individuals who bring business our way. And we'd still be making fifteen thousand to our profit."

"We're not in the business of buying monster parts; we're bold Monster Hunters! We stalk and slay to our own advantage; we do not haggle over prices like fishwives at the market! Now, I think we've wasted enough time on this. Stinkyfink, if you no longer wish us to rid you of your snail—free of charge—then we have no further business to discuss, and I suggest you vacate the premises, before you are charged a wasting-the-Association's-valuable-time fee."

"Five thousand," offered the gnome.

"Out!"

The small gnome dropped from his chair to the floor and bounded out the door, giving Dreelix a nasty look and a gnomish hand-gesture of dislike on the way out.

Dreelix immediately turned back to Buntleby, face flushed with anger.

"Uh-oh, here it comes," whispered Buntleby to Willowquisp.

"Tirade time," agreed the elderly sage.

"Of all the arrogant, MONEY-GRUBBING little gnomish TOADS!" screamed Dreelix in fury, spittle flying freely in all directions. "Buntleby! How DARE you bring such a person in here without notice? You've not only WASTED our valuable time, but you've managed to BESMIRCH our good name in the neighboring communities! No doubt that GREEDY little pile of PIG-FILTH will return to his stinky little gnome-home and tell his fellow SHRIMPLINGS how the Monster Hunters refused him aid! This is all your fault! Why, I've got half a mind to ..."

Having heard enough, Buntleby caught Zantoullios' eye and saw reflected there a shared determination to put an end to Dreelix's ravings. Fair's fair, after all, he thought.

Standing as one, the two wizards began speaking in an arcane language, waggling their outstretched fingers at the red-faced leader of the Monster Hunters. Dreelix immediately stopped his ranting and raving and plopped back into his seat, a blank expression on his face.

The Monster Hunters in the audience watched in silence as Dreelix stared ahead at nothing. Then, blinking as if to clear his head, he looked around in confusion. Grabbing his gavel as if to draw strength from it, he spoke for the first time since the *forget* spells hit him.

"Where was I? Oh yes. It seems we have a rather heavy agenda tonight. After Grindle briefs us on the sad, sorry state of our coffers, we'll have an update on the problems with Zantoullios' latest batch of healing potions—something about unexpected and unpleasant side effects—what's everyone smirking about?"

Johnathan M. Richards does most of his flailing in the swimming pool. Swimming requires the kicking of legs, the stroking of arms, and proper breathing. Pick any two of the above, and he can handle it—it's only when he tries all three at once that he becomes a menace to those in his immediate vicinity.

15. If left alone, a flail snail is completely nonaggressive. It is only when other beings approach (within the 20' radius of it's sensory abilities) that the flail snail attacks with its flailing appendages. Even then, once the intruder steps out of range, the flail snail does not pursue and goes back to its algae-grazing. Only other giant snails are not attacked immediately; if a flail snail is approached by another giant snail, it begins production of a love-dart in anticipation of a possible mating.

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Land of Spectres

In the domain of Lord Soth, the infamous death knight is not the only monster.

by
James Lowder

illustrated by
L. A. Williams

SITHICUS IS A DOMAIN OF SHIFTING TRUTHS, alluring lies, and deceptive certainties. When the domain first formed around Lord Soth, the dark powers taunted the death knight by creating an imperfect copy of Dargaard Keep, his home on Krynn. The place, which Soth defiantly named Nedragaard Keep (or "not Dargaard"), constantly recalled the world he had lost.

For a creature like Soth, whose unnatural existence is linked to his crimes, the imperfections of the domain proved more than an annoyance. Unable to bear the domain's flaws, he retreated from Sithicus into his own mind. As he did, the domain and its inhabitants suffered greater and greater torments. A plague swept the land. Within a year of the plague's outbreak, raiding parties from neighboring Invidia began to cross the border. Invidian assassins regularly venture into Sithicus to hunt for the Vistani band known as the Wanderers, a group led by Magda Ilyanova Kulchevich and her daughter Inza.

Soon after the first outbreak of plague, the wild elves of the Iron Hills began to stage forays against their civilized kin in the domain's three main cities, sowing chaos for its own sake. Recently, a mysterious leader has gathered the Iron Hills bands into a force set on driving Soth from Sithicus. This warlord is known only by a symbol: the White Rose. Some within the domain see the White Rose as a savior. Most understand that commoners are of little concern to a warrior powerful enough to threaten Lord Soth. Some rumors identify the White Rose as Kitiara. Others say the general is another, more threatening figure from Soth's past.

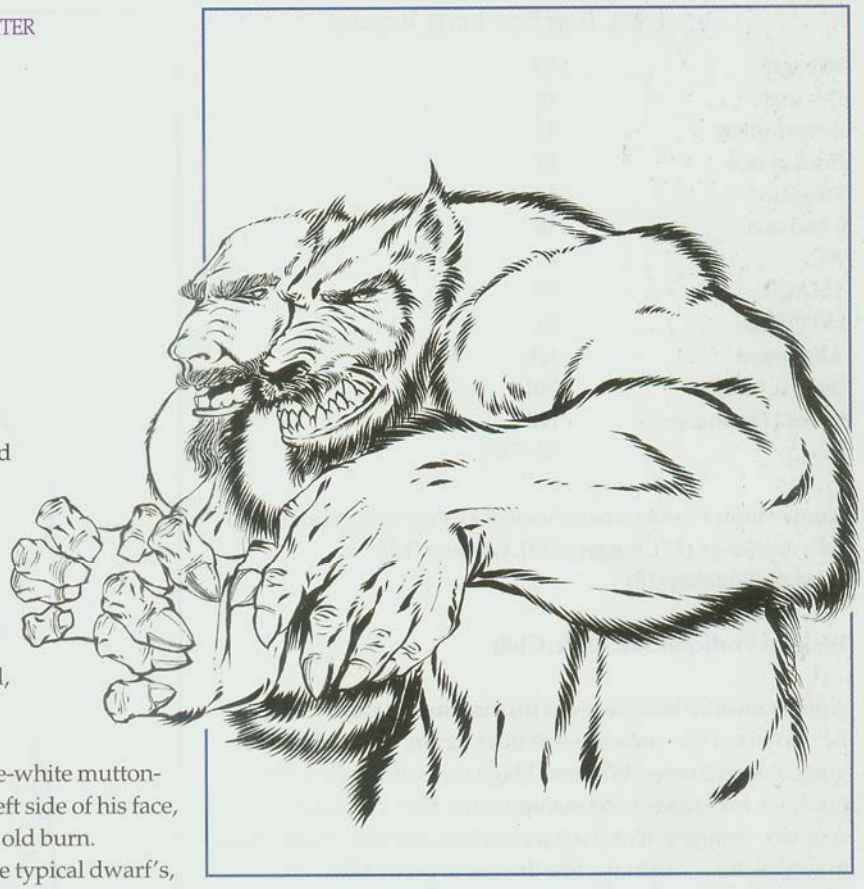
More directly distressing to the beleaguered citizens of Sithicus is the brazen presence of the supernatural. By the year 752, the thirteen skeletal warriors who serve Soth ride the countryside openly. Azrael, the domain's werebadger seneschal, has grown careless in concealing his lycanthropy, and two other macabre figures have appeared to prey upon the denizens of Sithicus: the Whispering Beast and the Bloody Cobbler.

As these factions vie for greater control of Sithicus, Lord Soth must act or lose his domain.

James Lowder is the co-author of Spectre of the Black Rose, *the sequel to* Knight of the Black Rose. *He has also penned several other novels and stories, as well as articles for* Sci-Fi Universe *and* AMAZING® Stories.

10th-Level Werebadger Fighter

Strength:	18/91
Dexterity:	16
Constitution:	18
Intelligence:	10
Wisdom:	12
Charisma:	12
AC:	4
THAC0:	9
Hit Points:	91
Alignment:	CE
Special Attacks:	Berserk frenzy
Special Defenses:	Silver or magical weapons required to hit
Size:	M (3'11")



Nonweapon Proficiencies: Mining (13), Set Snares (11), Blind Fighting, Hunting (15)

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle-ax, Short Sword, Hammer, Knife, Garrote, Flail

Appearance: Azrael is a bald dwarf with bone-white mutton-chop whiskers that meet as a mustache. The left side of his face, left arm, and chest are lightly scarred from an old burn. Azrael's fingers are even more stubby than the typical dwarf's, making them practically useless for delicate work. Azrael is careless of his appearance, though on special occasions he sports a silken surcoat with a black rose embroidered on front and back. He always wears his chain of office and a pair of scuffed boots shod with short iron spikes. He can take the form of a giant badger as well as a terrifying dwarf-badger hybrid.

Magical Items: Azrael sometimes steals magical items from the locals or confiscates them from unfortunate travelers. He quickly tires of such treasures, though, and discards them in the dungeons of Nedragaard Keep. The *ax of speed* he once carried was lost at the Veidrava salt mines in 745. Azrael has full use of the Lake of Sounds (detailed in *Spectre of the Black Rose*); this underground lake allows him to hear anything said within the domain of Sithicus. The only voices to which the lake is "deaf" are those of the White Rose and anyone in her presence.

Background: Azrael's origins lie in the vast subterranean city of Brigalaure, a beautiful haven of craft far beneath the ravaged surface of a Prime Material world. Unfortunately, Azrael possessed little skill and less inclination to work hard enough to compensate for his lack of talent. In a fit of rage, he killed his entire family, an act that introduced him to his true calling: murder. Pursued by the local authorities, Azrael fled into the lightless tunnels surrounding Brigalaure. There, a voice from the darkness offered him great power. Azrael was quick to accept, finding himself "blessed" with lycanthropy. Azrael never questioned the source of his powers. He assumes that "the dark" was behind the mist that surrounded him and deposited him in Ravenloft. Azrael wandered the domains of Forlorn and Gundarak before coming to Barovia in 720, where he met Lord Soth. He recognized Soth's power and offered himself as the death knight's first willing soldier in the Dark Domains. Soth rewarded him with the title of seneschal when the domain of Sithicus formed.

Roleplaying Notes: Once, Azrael was Soth's most loyal subject. As the death knight lingered in Nedragaard Keep, caught up in magical reverie, Azrael came to see Sithicus as his domain. With this realization came an alignment shift, from Lawful Evil to Chaotic Evil. He was always arrogant but is now supremely so. The power Azrael has assumed while Soth loiters on his throne has given him the opportunity to practice his cruelty on a large scale. He considers murder and catastrophe his art and strives to be creative in the suffering he creates.

Azrael has earned the appellation "the Sorrow of Sithicus" for the grief he causes the domain's citizens. He is especially hard on the workers at the Veidrava salt mine, the profits from which he uses to fund his schemes. Strangers who have the misfortune of drawing the dwarf's attention frequently end up in the mine. The clattering of Azrael's two-wheeled carriage, armored with the teeth and fangs of his defeated enemies, is enough to send most Sithicans scurrying for cover.

Inza Magdova Kulchevich

3rd-Level Thief/5th-Level Wizard

Strength:	13
Dexterity:	18
Constitution:	13
Intelligence:	17
Wisdom:	16
Charisma:	18
AC:	4
THAC0:	19
Hit Points:	24
Alignment:	NE
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	Nil
Size:	M (5'6")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History (16), Appraising (17), Astrology (17), Forgery (18), Gaming (18), Reading/Writing (18)

Weapon Proficiencies: Knife, Club

Appearance: Sixteen-year-old Inza is almost a mirror image of her mother at the same age—slender figure, raven-black hair, gorgeous green eyes. Whereas Magda was always brazen, however, Inza tends to be manipulative. She works hard to convince strangers that she is a sweet young thing, more prone to singing than scheming. She dresses in pretty skirts and embroidered blouses, but is quick to don her leather fighting gear if she knows a battle is coming.

Magical Items: Inza carries *Novgor*, a dagger that belonged to her ancestor, a Vistani hero named Kulchek the Wanderer. The *dagger +4* is a plain-looking weapon. *Novgor's* edge never dulls, and its needle-sharp point can be used by any Vistani Thief as a lockpick that adds +10% to Open Locks rolls.

Novgor is always brightly polished and seems immune to scratches or scuffs. In the hands of one of Kulchek's descendants, the flat of the blade can be used to cast a *color spray* at will as long as a light source brighter than a candle is within 5 yards. Once per week, the dagger's mirror-bright sides can be used to cast an *advanced illusion* at the 12th level of ability but with a duration of one hour/level. This illusion exhausts the caster, reducing Strength and Constitution by half for twenty-four hours. *Novgor* likely possesses other abilities and, perhaps, hindrances, but Inza has yet to discover them.

Inza also wears a special *charm of life protection*. This small silver pendant acts like an *amulet of life protection* with the additional power of shielding the wearer's shadow from capture or manipulation. The *charm* appears as a silver teardrop patterned with a twining vine that casts a small shadow on the wearer's flesh at all times.

Background: Inza was born in Gundarak in the inauspicious year 736, on the very night Duke Gundar was assassinated.

Among the Vistani of her caravan, it was said that her cry of outrage at being slapped by the midwife was louder than the worst shrieking of the unearthly tempest that raged the night of her birth. In later years, those same Vistani would wonder secretly if that storm had changed the newborn's soul.

As the daughter of Magda, raunie and founder of the Wanderers, Inza enjoys a special place in the caravan. Magda pampers her, perhaps to compensate for Inza's missing father, who was murdered by Duke Gundar's men not long before her birth. Despite this kindness, Inza has no respect for those around her and a secret disdain for most living things. She hides her cruelty from her mother as much as possible. Magda loves Inza too much to recognize her corrupt nature.

Roleplaying Notes: Though she tries to pass herself off as sweet and caring, Inza is a vicious, power-hungry misanthrope. She cares little for the unwritten codes of the Vistani, since they tend to make the individual subservient to the group. She also hates animals, particularly dogs, because she fears they can recognize her true nature.

Inza learned her thieving skills from some of the older men in the caravan, but her abilities as a Wizard are from some unknown source in Sithicus. Whatever goal she has set for herself, Inza is willing to sacrifice anyone and everyone to obtain it. Still, she is patient and will not reveal her motives—or her dark nature—until the time is right.

SUPERNATURAL AGENT

Strength:	12
Dexterity:	17
Constitution:	13
Intelligence:	15
Wisdom:	18
Charisma:	17
AC:	7
THAC0:	13
Hit Dice/Points:	8 (62 hit points)
Alignment:	N
Special Attacks:	Fear aura, control undead
Special Defenses:	Magic resistance, regeneration, shadow walk
Size:	M (6')

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Cobbling (19), Leatherworking (17)

Weapon Proficiencies: Knife

Appearance: The Cobbler is a tall figure in finely tailored clothes of a uniform, pale hue that is not a color so much as the ashen remnants after all color has been leeched away. His face and form are often obscured by a cloak and a wide-brimmed hat. When he first appears to an individual, the Cobbler often wears a full-face mask of padded cloth with a large hooked nose. The nose is hollowed and filled with roses. (Sithicans think this filters plague from the air.) A fine spattering of blood faintly stains the mask and all the Cobbler's clothes.

Beneath the mask, the Cobbler is a handsome young man with deep-set eyes and short, blond-white hair. His facial structure suggests a partial elven heritage. Some say that the Cobbler's visage appears smooth and featureless if glimpsed in the instant when the mask is first removed.

Magical Items/Abilities: The Cobbler carries a small leather case containing his shoemaker's tools. The tacks, snips, small hammer, and even the needles and thread are wrought of pure silver. Like his clothes and the pale case, these tools are flecked with gore. All the items in the case are magical. The three leather–cutting blades are *knives* +2.

The Cobbler can *shadow walk* at will to any point in Sithicus, though he cannot use the ability to enter the Demiplane of Shadow or any other plane. He can generate *fear* within a 5'-radius at will. These spells function at the 12th level of ability. The Cobbler has magical resistance of 50% and, if wounded, regenerates 4 hit points per round until healed.

The Cobbler can exert complete control over skeletons and zombies in Sithicus, and he can control undead creatures up to 6 HD as if a 5th-level Evil Priest. At wil, he can cause any dead person to rise from the ground as a zombie completely under his control. These abilities are limited to a 40'-radius area.

Background: The Bloody Cobbler is a legend in Sithicus, a phantom who stalks through camp tales and bad dreams. He metes out rough justice to those who betray their callings. If the stories are to be believed, men and women who repeatedly refuse to walk their intended paths in life can expect a fatal midnight visit. With his silver shoemaker's tools, the Cobbler slices the soles from his victim's feet, killing them. He then uses the flesh to shod those who need only be prompted back onto a road they truly wish to follow.

Until around the year 740, many assumed the stories of the Cobbler to be merely legend. Since that time, corpses have been discovered with the bottoms of their feet missing. No one can confirm the Cobbler's existence, but the discovery of any corpse with damage to its feet fuels talk of the Cobbler, as will a local's sudden change of career. Sithicans do not discuss the Cobbler or the Whispering Beast with outsiders.

Roleplaying Notes: Since the Cobbler's garb is flamboyant but not truly unusual for a Sithican merchant, there is nothing about him to draw suspicion. Indeed, he commonly introduces himself as "a tradesman hereabouts." Though the blood spattering his clothes is a certain tip-off, the gore is noticeable only by those in close proximity, and the Cobbler allows only those he wants to know his identity to come so close.

The Cobbler's motives are obscure, but he is not above small acts of kindness to those he has visited in the night, or the families of those he has slain. He always presents himself as a cultured man of the world, dashing and sophisticated. His voice is soothing, a stark contrast to the fear his name engenders.

The Whispering Beast

SUPERNATURAL AGENT

Strength:	18/99
Dexterity:	15
Constitution:	17
Intelligence:	18
Wisdom:	10
Charisma:	5
AC:	6
THAC0:	11
Hit Dice/Points:	8 (62 hit points)
Alignment:	LN
Special Attacks:	Spells, disease
Special Defenses:	Magic resistance, regeneration, shadow walk
Size:	M (6'8")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Modern Languages (19), Singing (9)

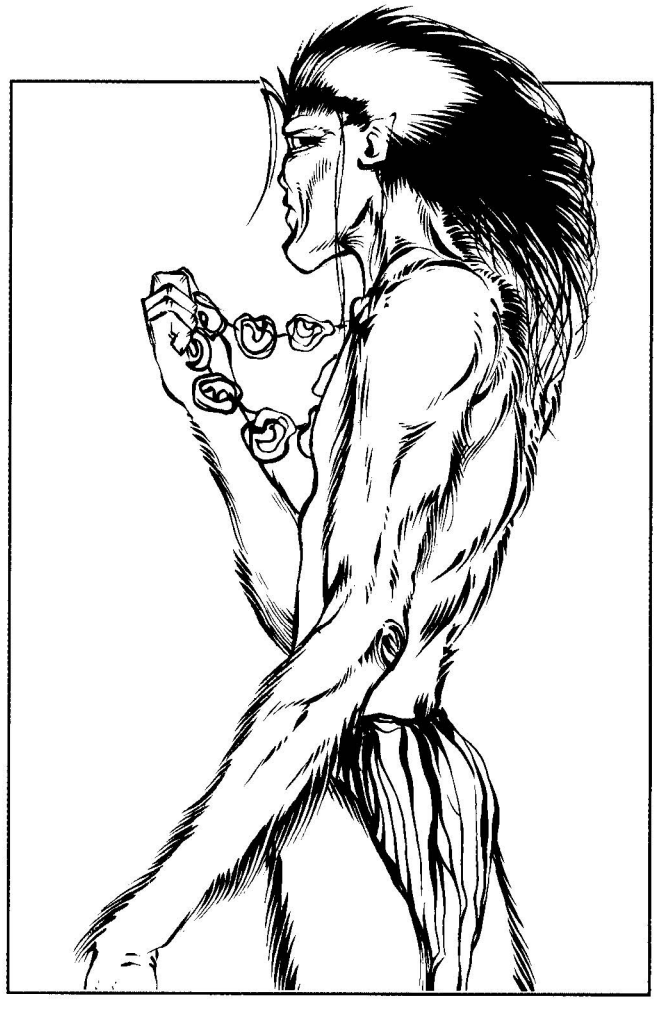
Weapon Proficiencies: Mace, Sword

Appearance: Rumors describe the Whispering Beast as tall and starvation thin. Stringy hair covers his entire body, gray-white but matted with dirt and excrement. His arms hang down past his knees, ending in hands with slender fingers that constantly twitch and trace vulgar patterns in the air. Those agile digits hint at the most horrible thing about the Beast: the faint remnants of a beauty so profound it cannot be hidden by any amount of grime. His face, too, holds vestiges of magnificence. His simian skull, all but fleshless at the crown, has the high cheekbones of a noble-born elf. The Beast stinks of decay. He wears no clothes and carries no obvious weapons, only a grotesque necklace of thirteen human ears looped around his neck on a chain of fire-blackened steel.

Magical Items/Abilities: The grim necklace worn by the Beast is a powerful magical item. Through any of the ears, he can speak to any person labeled an Oathbreaker—that is, anyone who has sworn an oath in public, broken it, then been publically accused of having done so. Any command the Beast whispers through the necklace of ears acts as a *geas* upon an Oathbreaker. The ears can also be used to speak to madmen other than Oathbreakers. These lunatics fully understand what the Beast says but are not compelled to obey.

The Beast can *shadow walk* at will to any point in Sithicus and can generate *fear* within a 5'-radius area on command. He can cast *ESP* and *know alignment* at will at the 12th level of ability. The Beast has magic resistance of 50% and, if wounded, regenerates 4 hit points per round until healed.

Background: Like the Bloody Cobbler, the Whispering Beast is a thing of legend and rumor. Oathbreakers can hear the Beast's voice, which repeats their every lie, every broken promise, and every dark deed. Day and night the accusations continue, until the Oathbreakers' minds unravel. Eventually, the Beast



summons Oathbreakers to his lair for more direct torment. The location of this lair remains a mystery.

The fact that the Beast doesn't stalk every liar makes some dismiss the "whispering madness" as the ravings of guilt-wracked consciences. Some who have never been caught at their deception are driven mad by fearful anticipation, wondering when the whispering will start.

Roleplaying Notes: The Whispering Beast revels in his own disgusting appearance. At the same time, he is smug about his moral superiority. He is even more elusive than the Bloody Cobbler and is unlikely to present himself to anyone but an Oathbreaker. Should characters stumble across his lair or come in contact with the Beast, they find the creature rude and provoking. The Beast assumes that all people are Oathbreakers waiting to be caught, and he uses his *ESP* ability to glean characters' fears and play upon them with taunting comments.

If threatened, the Beast commands his madmen to subdue his attackers or forestall any threat until he can escape through the shadows. He does not specifically endanger the madmen in his "care," as he believes their fate to be worse than death. In combat, the Beast has three attacks. His hands cause 1–4 points of damage each, while his bite inflicts 1–8 points of damage. A bite from the Whispering Beast is likely to infect a character with a debilitating (90%) or a fatal (10%) disease.

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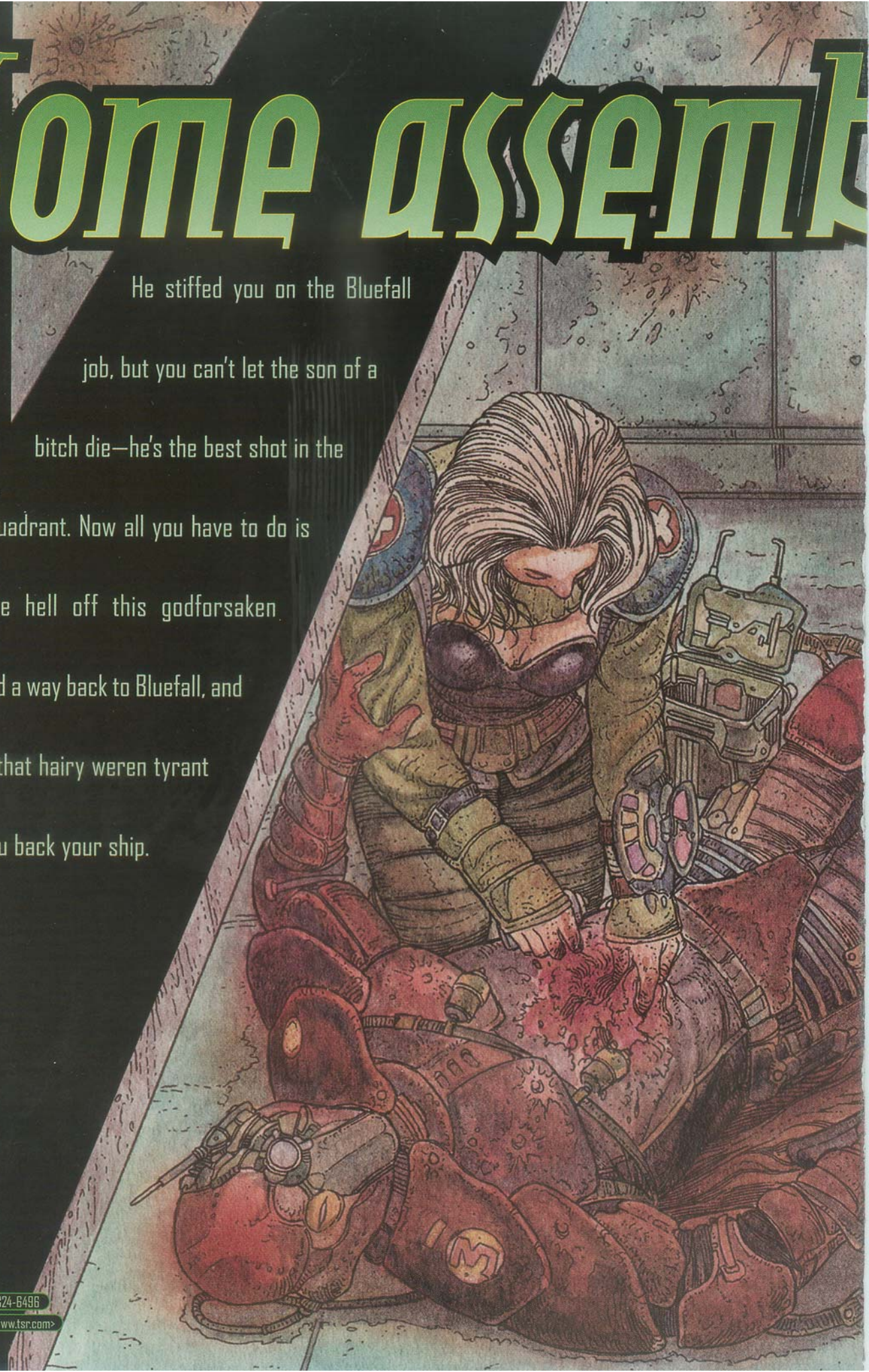

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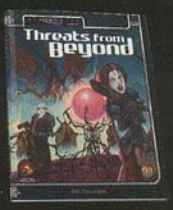

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Role Models

Figs in Space!

Choosing Miniatures for Your ALTERNITY® Campaign

By J.D. Wiker and Jim Bishop

Photography by Craig Cudnohufsky

The real test of using miniatures in a roleplaying game is establishing a consensus of what the figures represent. It's important that everyone not only agrees but *remembers* which figure is a player character and which is a foe. AD&D® game monsters are easy to represent, since there are plenty of fantasy figures available (especially from Ral Partha's AD&D miniatures line). The ALTERNITY® game, however, is relatively new. At this point, there are no figures specifically designed for the game.

Drybrushing

Drybrushing is a technique that creates a sense of depth on a figure by highlighting raised portions, creating an impression of shadows. It works especially well to represent armor.

Paint the armor black to start. Then, using an old paintbrush (since this technique will ruin a good one), lightly dip the brush in a metallic color, and wipe off all but a little of the paint onto a piece of paper towel. Now just as lightly, drag the brush over the black armor. What's left of the paint sticks to the figure in the high places, leaving the deeper places dark. Experiment until it's just right—and don't be afraid to start over!

On the other hand, there are plenty of science fiction games for which there are existing miniatures. For example, Ral Partha has created an extensive line of well-sculpted figures for FASA's *Shadowrun** roleplaying game, and both RAFM and Geo-Hex manufacture futuristic military miniatures that are just right for representing the kind of security forces found in the STAR*DRIVE® setting.

That pretty well covers the humans, but what about the other species? The STAR*DRIVE setting is full of starfaring aliens and bizarre lifeforms. Without them, the setting wouldn't be the same, and their absence on the game table would be extremely conspicuous. So, bearing in mind that the goal is to provide distinctive miniatures that are not necessarily perfect representions, it's time to explore some alternatives.

Improvising Aliens

When choosing ALTERNITY miniatures, save time and money by letting the players choose (and purchase) their own miniatures. As the Gamemaster, you should focus on providing figures for the opposition. No matter whether you're the Gamemaster or a player, to approximate ALTERNITY aliens, you should first determine the defining physical characteristic of an alien species, then choose a miniature with a similar characteristic.

Humans are easy, obviously, and mechalus heroes are only a little less so. Use human figures for mechalus characters, but use metallic paint for their flesh. This works especially well if the "mechalus" figure wears some unusual armor.

Fraal are small. There aren't many figures on the market with spindly limbs and large eyes, so consider a couple of ways to work around this

After painting the armor black, drybrush the same area to emphasize detail.

problem. Since fraal often use their mindwalking talents to disguise themselves as something else of roughly the same size and shape, you can use a non-fraal miniature easily enough. The other option is to use a humanoid figure in a smaller size range than the standard figures—from 25mm down to 15mm, for example. The fact that it's so much smaller makes it obvious that it's not one of the other races.

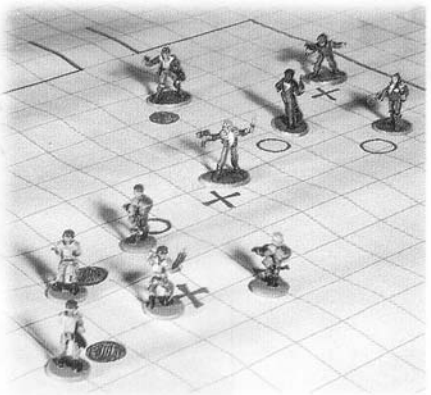
T'sa and weren heroes are much easier to simulate, with lizardmen for the former and werewolves for the latter (scales and fur, respectively). Winged sesheyans are by far the most difficult, but any of the draconian figures (from the DRAGONLANCE® setting) should do the job well enough—at least until there are officially licensed figures to represent the sesheyans more accurately.

Using Cover in the ALTERNITY Game

In the ALTERNITY roleplaying game, cover comes in three varieties: light, medium, and heavy, imposing a +1, +2, and +3 step penalty, respectively, to the opponent's rolls. Obviously, everybody involved is going to want to get the best cover they can—and fast. But being able to spot and judge the best cover is no mean feat in the middle of a firefight.

This scenario begins with the heroes making their way through the bowels of an industrial zone toward the hangout of their opposition. Unfortunately, partway there, they are startled by the sudden appearance of their foes, only meters away! It's a blind meeting, with no chance to make detailed plans.

Begin by having the players make individual Tactics—*infantry tactics* checks. On an Ordinary success, the character spots light cover; on a Good success, the character spots medium cover; and on an Amazing success, heavy cover. On a Critical Failure, the character is too startled to decide on cover, and attacks against the character receive a –1 step bonus. On a failure (in this case, a Marginal success), the character decides on a place to get his head down and makes for it—but too late to get any cover bonus for the first phase of the round. Once all the players have made their rolls, make



An X indicates light cover; an O medium cover; a solid O is heavy cover.

the same rolls for the bad guys.

Now comes the fun part: where exactly is that cover? Using the Scatter Diagram on page 47 of the ALTERNITY *Gamemaster Guide*, roll a d12 and move the character the indicated direction a number of inches equal to half the character's Run rate. (See the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*, page 39.) Then draw a simple diagram on the map to indicate the sort of cover the character has: Xs for light, Os for medium, and solid Os for heavy. Again, do the same for the opposition. Make sure that the diagram extends to cover the character from any enemy attack—after all, there's no sense taking cover from an enemy in front when another has a clear shot at one's back.

So now the heroes and their foes are scattered all over the table, and the battle begins in earnest. Some of the characters may have ended up cut off from their comrades, and it's up to the heroes to sprint from cover to cover to their friend's rescue—or up to the bad guys to leave their erstwhile buddies to their fates. The combat ends when one side withdraws or is defeated.

Rocketed to Earth from his native planet, JD Wiker paints miniatures when he's not out fighting extra-galactic menaces. Due to his curious fixation on Charlton Heston, Jim refuses to paint unless The Omega Man *is playing somewhere in the building.*

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by L.A. Williams

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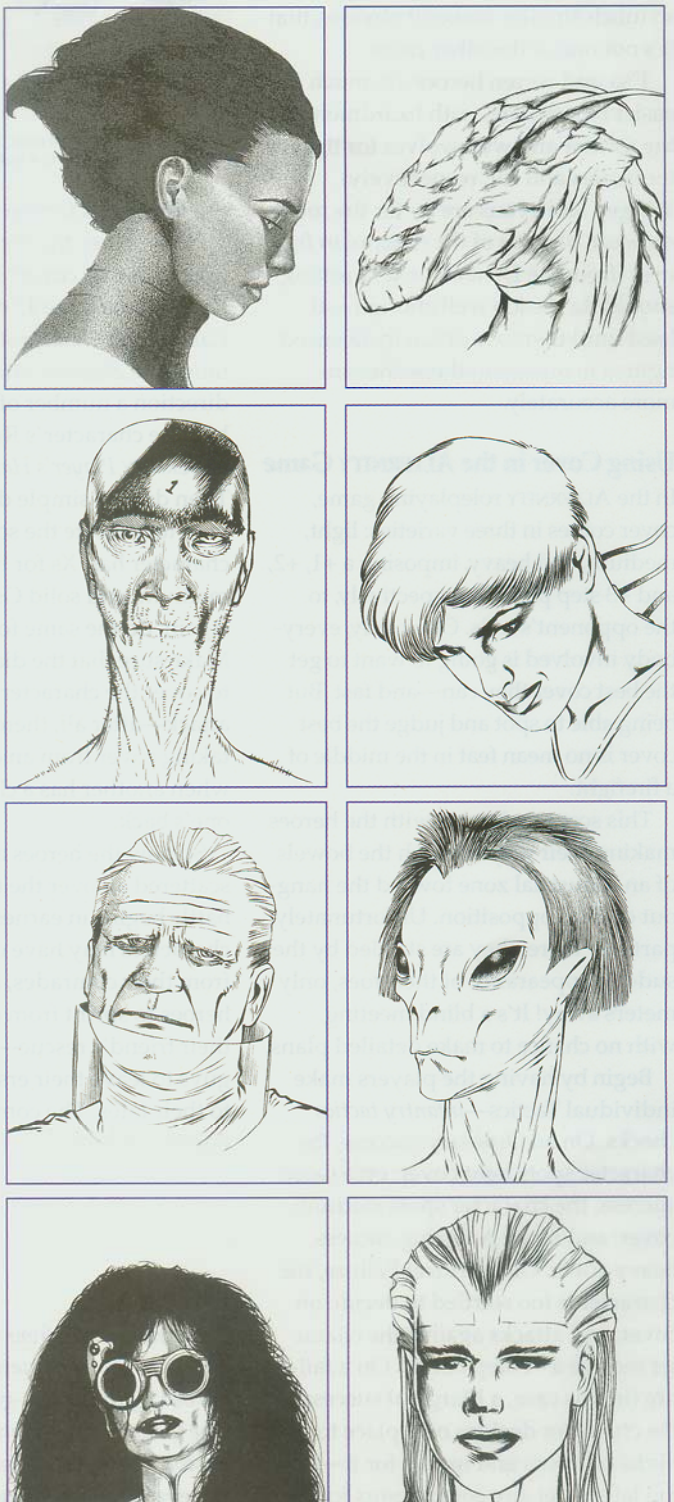

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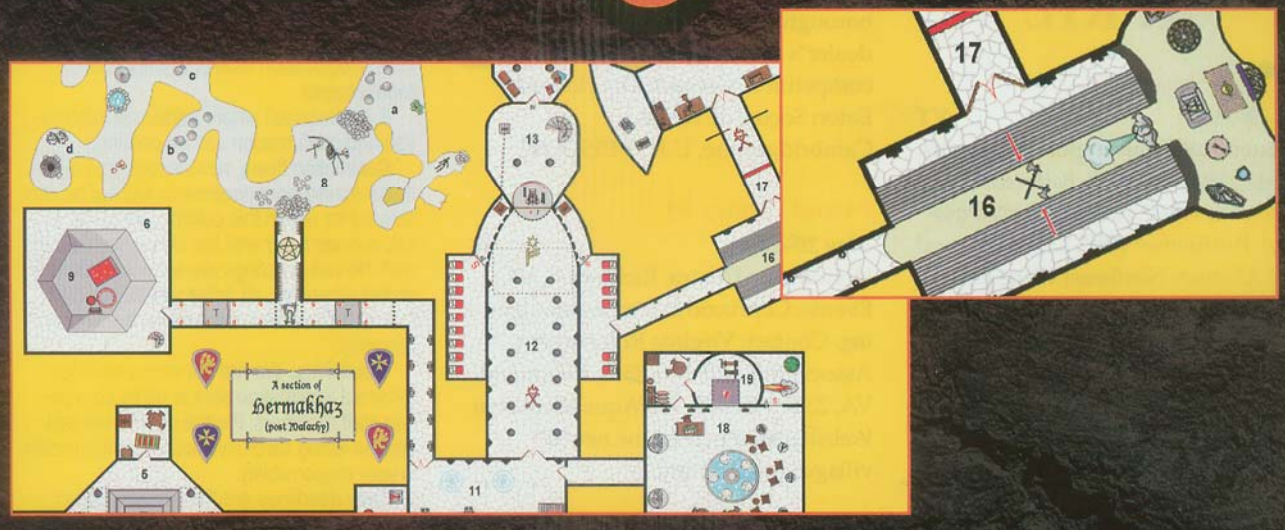

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Convention Calendar

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Our Con
April 23–25 **MA**
UMass Campus, Amherst MA. Events: AD&D, *Warhammer**, *Car Wars*, *Vampire* RPG, *Shadowrun**, *Champions**, *In Nomine**, *Terminus**, *IT**, and more. Contact: OurCon, RSO 178-416, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003. Email: ourcon@ hotmail.com. Website:www.umass.edu/ rso/gameclub/ourcon.

Orion 1999
April 23–25 ⁕
Days Inn, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. AD&D, *Advanced Civilization**, *Age of Renaissance**, *Axis & Allies*, *B5** CCG, *Bloodbowl**, *Cyberpunk 2020**, *Deadlands**, *GURPS Fantasy**, *Heavy Gear**, *L5R*, *Magic*, *Star Fleet Battles**, *Star Wars** CCG, *Vampire* RPG, six RPGA® LIVING CITY™ scenarios, *Amber Throne War**, *Silent Death** demos, and other tournaments. Email: orion@aracnet.net.

OpCon
April 24 **IL**
Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, IL. Guests: Mary Francis Zambreno and Susan Van Camp. Website: http://oprfhs.org/activ/scifi/opcon.

MAY

Fantasy Fair Nine
May 9 ❁
The Cresset Exhibition, Bretton, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, UK. Events: dealer's room, demos, and costume competition. Contact: The Hallards, Eaton Socon, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, U.K., PE19 3QW.

Patriot Games 99
May 20–23 **VA**
Holiday Inn Centra, Richmond, VA. Events: Caprizzio in concert and gaming. Contact: Virginia Roleplayer's Association, P.O. Box 8865, Richmond, VA, 23225. Email: VRPAques@aol.com. Website: members.home.net:80/village6/page3.html.

KelCon 1
May 28–30 ⁕
North Campus, Okanagan University College, Kelowna, BC. Events: RPGA sanctioned roleplaying, *Warhammer Fantasy Battles* and *40K*, *Starfleet Battles*, White Wolf LARP, TCG tournaments, game auction, boardgames, and more. Contact: KelCon, 1720 Blondeaux Crescent, Kelowna, BC, Canada V1Y 4J7. Email: rook@cnx.net.

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Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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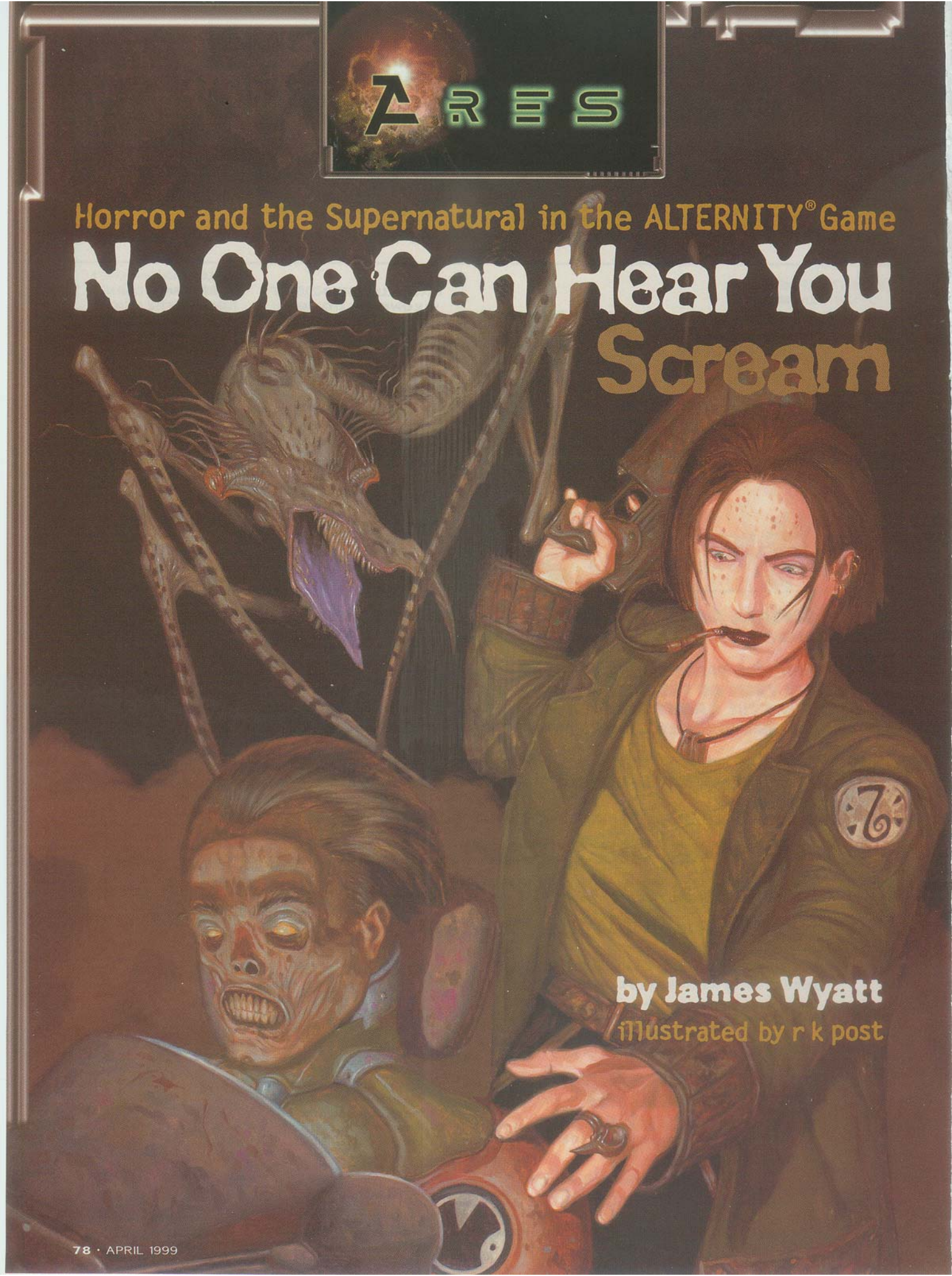
ARES

Horror and the Supernatural in the ALTERNITY® Game

No One Can Hear You Scream



by James Wyatt

illustrated by r k post

Horror comes in many flavors:

the classic Gothic horror of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, the slasher horror of *Psycho* or *Halloween*, and the supernatural horror of Cthulhu and the Living Dead films. Just as horror comes in many forms, it easily crosses literary and roleplaying genres—from medieval horror like the RAVENLOFT® campaign, through Victorian (*Masque of the Red Death*) settings, to modern-day or futuristic settings like the STAR*DRIVE® campaign.

The ALTERNITY® *Gamemaster Guide* discusses horror as a science-fiction genre, giving some sense of the many possibilities that exist in this broad description: "The premise of horror SF centers on the presence of dark creatures and phenomena inimical to human life" (page 181). From *Day of the Triffids* to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to *The Twilight Zone*, science-fiction films and books offer a wealth of ideas to inspire an ALTERNITY adventure or campaign tinged with horror. The game rules already offer some mechanics to make such a campaign work.

Mental Resolve: Resisting Horror

One game mechanic that helps to facilitate the introduction of horror to an ALTERNITY campaign is the Resolve–*mental resolve* skill. As described in the *Player's Handbook*, this skill measures "a hero's ability to cope with emotional or mental stress of all kinds … emotional trauma, fear, panic, madness, insanity, mind control techniques, and mental powers" (page 94). In other words, the stuff of horror! The *Gamemaster Guide* expands on this description, suggesting that Resolve–*mental resolve* is especially appropriate to determine a hero's reaction to events in a horror campaign, from the "death of a friend or companion" to "invasive mental assault" or "hideous, frightening, or disgusting aliens" (page 79).

With a few adjustments, a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check is a versatile way to ensure that heroes react appropriately to a confrontation with their worst nightmares. The RAVENLOFT campaign setting introduces three kinds of die rolls to measure these reactions: fear, horror, and madness checks. These checks are required whenever characters face an especially fearsome enemy (fear check), confront the scene of a grisly murder (horror check), or probe the depths of an alien or undead mind (madness check). By treating each of these checks as a specialized form of the Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check, this mechanic can be easily introduced into the ALTERNITY game.

Remember, however, that ALTERNITY is a roleplaying game. If a player adequately roleplays his hero's reactions to the horrific events of the game, there is no need to use fear or horror checks. They are intended, here as in the RAVENLOFT campaign, as tools to nudge players toward good roleplaying, not as substitutes. Madness checks, on the other hand, are best rolled, as it is difficult to roleplay the mind-shattering effects of insanity.

The following guidelines are based heavily on the *Domains of Dread* book for the RAVENLOFT campaign setting.

Fear Checks

Fear is, essentially, the human mind's reaction to danger. It is the rush of adrenaline, the "fight-or-flight" response, that surges through the body when something threatens one's existence. When confronted with a powerful opponent, when stumbling upon the remains of an obviously deadly encounter, when

Table 1: Fear Check Situation Modifiers

+3	Extremely terrifying
+2	Moderately fearsome
+2	Hero has already suffered any mortal damage
+1	Slightly frightful
+1	Hero has been defeated by a similar danger in the past
+1	Hero is alone
+1	Hero is in open space
+1	Hero is suffering from wound damage
–1	Hero has overcome a similar danger in the past
–1	An innocent, friend, or ally is in clear danger from the threat
–1	Hero or group possesses something they believe will help them overcome this danger
–2	Hero or group possesses something that has proven to help overcome a similar danger in the past

Table 2: Fear Check Results

Amazing or Good Success	The hero conquers his fear and continues normally with his actions.
Ordinary Success	The hero is startled. He pulls away from the source of his fear and fumbles with items in his hands. He must roll a Dexterity feat check for each held item, with failure indicating that he drops the item. In addition, all of the hero's actions in this round are delayed by one phase. Actions that would have taken place in the Marginal phase are forfeited.
Failure	The hero is fearstruck. He screams and stumbles backward. He must roll a Dexterity feat check, with failure indicating that he trips and falls. He can take no actions in this round.
Critical Failure	The terrified hero seeks to hide from the danger, either looking for reliable cover in the immediate area or fleeing if no such cover exists. The hero begins to recover his senses in ten minutes, assuming the source of the fear is no longer present. In the absence of the fear-causing situation, another hero can use the Leadership broad skill to shake the hero out of his panic.

Table 3: Horror Check Situation Modifiers

+3	Extremely horrifying situation
+3	A relative or fellow hero participates in the scene
+2	Moderately horrific situation
+2	Hero has suffered any mortal damage
+2	An innocent, friend, or ally participates in the scene
+1	Slightly horrible situation
+1	Hero has been horrified by a similar scene in the past
+1	Hero is in close quarters, with no room to run
+1	Hero's moral attitude is Ethical, Gallant, or Virtuous
+1	Hero is alone
+1	Hero is in open space
+1	Hero is suffering from wound damage
–1	Hero's moral attitude is Pathetic, Corrupt, Despicable, or Unscrupulous
–1	Hero has overcome a similar scene in the past
–1	Hero has room to run away
–1	An innocent, friend, or ally is in clear danger

left alone in an unfamiliar place, when faced with something new and unknown, the natural reaction is fear.

Heroes should make a fear check whenever they face an enemy in combat who is obviously too powerful to resist. Even outside of combat situations where the heroes' lives are in obvious danger, circumstances can dictate a fear check. If a hero is faced with isolation in an unknown or alien environment (especially in space), or if the heroes happen across some scene that suggests the terrible nature of the situation they are in without directly confronting them with a physical threat (such as the

Table 4: Horror Check Results

Amazing or Good Success	The hero suppresses his revulsion and continues normally with his actions.
Ordinary Success	The hero flees the scene in profound fear. He moves at full speed away from the source of his horror for ten minutes. The effects of his horror linger far beyond that time. For the next month, he cannot bear to return to the place where the incident occurred, or anyplace like it. Anything reminiscent of the horror he faced fills him with renewed revulsion. He suffers a +2 penalty to all his actions while in the presence of something that reminds him of the horror scene. After two weeks, he can make another horror check, with success indicating that he has gotten over the ill effects of his horror. If this check fails, he must wait another two weeks before trying again.
Failure	The hero becomes obsessed with the cause of his horror. His sleep is plagued by nightmares—he awakens every half-hour or so with a scream. After every sleepless night, he must make a Stamina–*endurance* check. A Critical Failure on this check indicates that he suffers 2 points of fatigue damage, while a Failure indicates a loss of 1 point of fatigue damage. Without rest, the hero cannot recover from fatigue or any other damage. During the day, he can think of nothing but the horrific event. Due to this obsession, he suffers a +1 penalty to all his action checks and surprise rolls. After each month that passes, the hero can attempt a new horror check to see if he can escape the memory of the horrific event.
Critical Failure	The hero's mind threatens to collapse under the weight of the horror that has engulfed him. The hero enters a state of mental shock, staring blankly at the cause of the horror. He is unable to take any action, even in self-defense. He can move only if dragged from the scene. He returns to some semblance of normality when removed from the presence of whatever caused the horror, but subsequent exposure to the same or a similar scene forces him to make a new horror check, with a +1 step penalty. Anything less than a Good success on this check indicates that he enters a state of shock once more. After each month that passes, the hero can attempt a new horror check with a +1 step penalty to determine whether he can recover from the lasting shock of the event.

remains of the alien's latest victim), a fear check is in order.

To make a fear check, a player rolls a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check, applying situation modifiers from **Table 1.** Remember that if a hero does not possess the specialty skill, he must use his Resolve broad skill, if he has it (with a base situation die of +d4), or use his untrained Will score (half his Will, rounded down) and start with a base situation die of +d4.

The results of a fear check depend on the die roll and the degree of success or failure achieved, as shown on **Table 2.**

Once again, note that these extreme results are intended to encourage players to roleplay their heroes' reactions to fear-inspiring situations.

Horror Checks

Horror is a more intense and far-reaching state than fear. Horror is, at its core, the mind's outright refusal to accept what a person sees or experiences. It is a reaction of profound revulsion or anguish that haunts a person for hours or even days. Facing a gibbering, drooling alien might cause a hero to run in fear, but realizing that his wife is actually a sinister, insidious invader has a much deeper impact. While a swinging scythe might inspire fear, it is the tiny needles that cause horror.

It is difficult to specify when heroes should make horror checks. Generally, supernatural experiences, those that defy categorization or even description in the language of normal experience, provoke horror checks. Combat specs and similar types are generally hardened to scenes of carnage that would horrify other heroes, but even so, watching a young alien erupt from the stomach of a companion can fill even hardened warriors with dread.

As with a fear check, a player makes a horror check by rolling a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check, applying situation modifiers from **Table 3.** Again, if a hero does not possess the specialty skill, he must either use the Resolve broad skill, if he has it (with a base situation die of +d4), or use his untrained Will score (half his Will, rounded down) and start with a base situation die of +d4.

The results of a horror check depend on the die roll and the degree of success or failure achieved, as shown on **Table 4.**

Madness Checks

Madness is more than an emotional reaction or a deep-seated revulsion; it shakes the foundations of human personality and reason. While fear results from the immediate or implied threat of danger, and horror is the consequence of an upset in one's view of reality, madness comes about when one's sense of self and the world are brought under a thorough and repeated assault.

There are few circumstances that require heroes to make madness checks. The most obvious of these is when a human (or near-human) mind comes into direct psionic contact with a completely alien intelligence. In a horror game, any alien mind can qualify as "completely alien"; if you are injecting horror into a lighter space opera setting, only contact with rare and unusual alien species should force madness checks. Such species would definitely include non–carbon-based lifeforms (such as the fluorosilicate life of Polyphemus in the Lucullus system, in the STAR*DRIVE setting). Direct psionic contact includes the use of the following psionic skills: ESP–*empathy* and *mind reading*, and Telepathy–*contact* and *suggest*. It does not matter whether the hero or the alien initiates the contact; the hero's mind is in equal danger either way.

Other circumstances might also warrant madness checks, but they are much harder to define. In general, if a hero seems to be reaching a breaking point—when even the player is having a hard time dealing with the hero's situation—it is probably time for a madness check. Unlike fear and horror checks, madness checks should always be rolled, since it is difficult to roleplay insanity without the assistance of game mechanics.

Table 5: Madness Check Situation Modifiers

+3	Extremely insane situation
+2	Moderately maddening situation
+1	Slightly unbalancing situation
+1	Hero has been horrified by a similar scene in the past
+1	Hero has failed a fear, horror, or madness check in the past 24 hours
+1	Hero is in open space

Table 6: Madness Check Results

Amazing or Good Success	The hero retains his sanity and continues normally with his actions.
Ordinary Success	The hero's mind shuts itself off from the outside world, causing the hero to slip into a catatonic trance. The hero sits motionless and does not respond to any outside stimuli. He is unable to defend himself from any form of attack, so his resistance modifiers do not apply; however, his Will resistance modifier becomes +5, reflecting his mind's powerful defenses against any further intrusion. A character with the Medical science–*psychology* skill can treat the hero; the illness is considered Moderate, requiring 5 successful skill checks to treat; each check is made with a +2 penalty and represents a week of elapsed time.
Failure	The hero's mind begins to splinter, causing unpredictable swings in his mood, even complete changes of personality. His entire moral outlook can change from week to week or alter in an instant when the hero is under stress. At the start of every week, or in situations of stress, the Gamemaster should roll 1d12 and consult **Table 7** to determine the hero's new moral outlook.

Table 7: Schizophrenic Moral Outlook

1	Anti-authority
2	Apathetic
3	Corrupt
4	Despicable
5	Ethical
6	Gallant
7	Honorable
8	Just
9	Selfish
10	Unscrupulous
11	Virtuous
12	Worldly

Like fear and horror checks, a madness check is simply a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check, with situation modifiers applied from **Table 5.** If a hero does not possess that specialty skill, he must either use the Resolve broad skill, if he has it (with a base situation die of +d4), or use his untrained Will score (half his Will, rounded down) and start with a base situation die of +d4.

The results of a horror check depend on the die roll and the degree of success or failure achieved, as shown on **Table 6.**

A character with the Medical Science–*psychology* skill can treat the hero. The illness is Extreme, requiring eight successful skill checks to treat; each check is made with a +3 penalty and represents a month of elapsed time.

Critical Failure: Sometimes a shock to the mind can overwhelm the most basic mental functions, even those that keep the body alive. If a hero rolls a Critical Failure on a madness check, he must immediately make a Stamina or Stamina–*endurance* skill check with a +2 step penalty. Failure indicates that the hero dies from the overwhelming shock. Even if the skill check is successful, the hero's Constitution score is permanently reduced by 1, and he is knocked out, suffering enough stun damage to mark off all his stun boxes.

Horrors of Space

The mechanics of fear, horror, and madness checks can help to build an atmosphere of horror in an ALTERNITY campaign, but the key element is the creature or situation that prompts heroes to make such checks. As horror/sci-fi movies are often named after the featured antagonist (*Alien, Predator, Terminator, Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), so can a horror campaign take much of its character from the alien or other horrific creature that dominates it. A number of appropriate alien lifeforms are described in published material for the STAR*DRIVE campaign. These creatures, and the others described below, can serve as the driving force behind a horror campaign.

Horror is a broad genre, and elements of horror can creep their way into many different campaign styles. An entire campaign can be based around themes of the macabre, but techniques of horror can also enrich a campaign based in another science fiction genre, be it colonization, combat, or space opera. The specific alien threat that forms the basis of a horror campaign or adventure helps determine which genre the game tends toward.

Teln

The teln, an alien creature described in the STAR*DRIVE Campaign Setting (pages 186–187), is a parasitic creature that infiltrates and dominates a human host. An infestation of these creatures could be the hook for an adventure or a whole campaign based on an *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* theme.

In a contemporary campaign: A meteor crashes in the Nevada desert, carrying a colony of teln. Spreading quickly into human hosts, the teln take over a city, corporation, or military base. The heroes could be the last remaining uninfected humans, or they might be outsiders wandering into the teln colony after the takeover is complete.

In a near-future campaign: Humanity's first colony on the Moon or Mars sends back the earth-shaking news that life—tiny wormlike creatures—does in fact exist on this barren satellite. However, leaders of the colony start exhibiting strange behavior, and the colonist heroes must determine why.

In a far-future campaign: In the course of exploring the galaxy, the heroes' starship welcomes an alien ambassador aboard. A few days later, the ambassador dies of mysterious causes. The ship's doctor performs an autopsy and soon starts acting strangely herself. The teln spread like an epidemic throughout the closed environment.

Cykotek

Cykoteks are the perfect antagonists for a horror campaign with a cyberpunk theme. As described in the *STAR*DRIVE ALIEN COMPENDIUM*™ book (pages 23–24), cykoteks are cybernetically enhanced humans who have sacrificed their sanity and something of their humanity in exchange for more and better cyber gear. Driven by a pseudo-religious fervor intensified by cyber-induced madness, cykoteks are rampaging killers best suited to a slasher-film type of horror game. Taking Freddy Krueger's knifed glove to its logical extreme, cykoteks are literally killing machines.

In a contemporary campaign: Without extensive cybertechnology available, a cykotek is impossible. A cykotek could appear in a contemporary setting, however, as a time-traveler (as in the *Terminator* movies), or—with very limited cybernetic enhancement—as a sort of rogue bionic man who escaped from a top-secret government laboratory.

In a near-future campaign: The cykotek embodies all that is horrific about the cyberpunk genre. A rampaging killer haunts the filthy streets of 21st-century Manhattan—a gritty metropolis where the rich never leave their sky-high penthouses for fear of encountering the gangs that rule the ground. The cykotek could be a killing machine or a Grid-stalking madman. Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the chat room …

In a far-future campaign: In a future where cybernetic enhancement is widespread and accepted, a galactic megacorporation installs fast chips in all of its employees on a certain space station, unaware of or unconcerned with the consequences. One by one, the station workers fall over the edge of sanity, creating a virtual epidemic of cykosis. The heroes are soon surrounded by madmen on an isolated space station, faced with the knowledge that their own fast chips might soon claim their sanity as well.

Spikespore

The spikespore (*ALIEN COMPENDIUM*, book pages 107–108) bears a certain similarity to the namesake of the *Alien* movies and works well in exactly such a scenario. Whatever the time frame of

the campaign, a spikespore larva attaches itself to a space vehicle (a contemporary NASA space shuttle, a near-future slower-than-light exploration ship, or a far-future starship) and implants its young in the inhabitants, who die horrible deaths as the hatchlings emerge. For the heroes, it's all downhill from there.

Dimensional Horrors

Dimensional horrors, aptly named, are described in the *Alien Compendium* book (pages 110–111). Created by an ancient Precursor race as guardians, they are ferocious and tireless fiends with the ability to shift into an alternate dimension. From there they stalk their prey unhindered by physical barriers. Whether the heroes are contemporary troubleshooters, near-future colonists, or far-future explorers, a basic scenario involving these creatures looks much the same: Deep under the Antarctic ice or Martian soil, or hidden in the swamps of Yellow Sky, a scientific probe uncovers the remnants of an ancient alien colony. Unwittingly triggering a portal to another dimension, the scientists investigating the site unleash a dimensional horror, which quickly exterminates the team. The heroes are sent to investigate the missing scientific expedition.

Gardhyi

The gardhyi (*Alien Compendium* book, pages 119–121) are a mysterious and apparently malign alien race with extensive psionic and quasi-magical powers to supplement their advanced alien technology. Cloaking their alien features with human clothes and dark glasses, these aliens move undetected among humankind, pursuing their nefarious goals.

In a contemporary or near-future campaign: The gardhyi can appear in a contemporary setting in the same fashion as the fraal (as described in the Alternity *Player's Handbook*). If humanity is already interacting with the fraal, then the gardhyi can appear in the background of these negotiations, attempting to sabotage the collaboration between the two species. If the fraal are left out of the campaign, then the gardhyi make a more sinister first alien contact. Alien abduction, sinister experiments, even genetic manipulation—the heroes would be investigators trying to track down the cause of these horrors, as in *The X-Files*.

In a far-future campaign: As they are described in the *Alien Compendium* book, the gardhyi can add an element of intrigue to a far-future campaign. To bring that intrigue to the level of horror requires an unfolding revelation of the gardhyi's master plan—something less political and more horrifyingly personal—and a description of their awful methods of accomplishing that plan. While the apparent scarcity of female gardhyi immediately suggests a plot along the lines of *Mars Needs Women*, it's probably better to steer clear of bad taste. Instead, suppose that the gardhyi race faces a severe epidemic of mental illness—gardhyi above a certain age regularly fall into mental collapse, exhibiting severe symptoms ranging from total catatonia to violent psychosis. Gardhyi agents spread through the surrounding regions of space seeking to understand more about what makes the mind work—assuming some parallel between gardhyi and other sentient minds. Seeing humans and their allied alien races as more appropriate scientific subjects than gardhyi (much the same way twentieth-century science viewed chimpanzees), these agents perform subtle experiments on the minds of their victims, exploring the edges of sanity through psychological and biological means. Some of their victims end up in the (admittedly advanced) asylums of the twenty-sixth century, while others end up dead, drained of cerebrospinal fluid through a tiny puncture mark in the back of the neck.

Magus

The magus is an enigmatic creature—whether it is alive or robotic in nature remains to be determined. It is literally or figuratively a killing machine, so far encountered in the Verge only in the role of a highly effective assassin. It lends itself easily to scenarios similar to the movie *Predator*, where an individual or group is hunted by a magus. It is possible that the magus is a creation of the gardhyi—either a purely robotic creation, the result of cybernetic modification of human or alien bodies, or even the implantation of a human mind (driven insane by the experience, of course) into a robotic body. Whatever

the time-frame of the campaign, the magus can be introduced as a silent hunter stalking the heroes or another important figure.

The Walking Dead

From *Dracula* to *Interview With the Vampire*, legends of the undead have spawned a vast variety of horror stories in every genre. Besides vampires, popular villains in this tradition include ghosts, mummies, and zombies. The AD&D® game, and particularly the *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium®* volumes, present scores of undead foes. While Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos pits the forces of science and deduction against creatures that threaten the foundations of reason and sanity, the undead represent a deeper conflict—between life and death, between a belief in an eternal soul and the void of the grave. Any of these undead creatures could be adapted into an Alternity game with a little imagination, but one strand of the tradition survives the transition to science fiction particularly well—the tradition of necromancy, or black magic.

The necromancer is a human sorcerer who communicates with the spirits of the dead and also has the power to make the dead walk, usually as zombies. Alternity's FX rules can cover the range of necromantic skills and spells, adding a unique flavor of supernatural horror to a sci-fi campaign.

Necromantic FX

FX powers usable by necromancers are all Arcane Magic FX, as described in the Alternity *Gamemaster Guide*. A necromancer must pay 15 skill points for the Arcane Magic FX broad skill, which allows him only to learn the related specialty skill. No Arcane Magic specialty skill (spell) can be used untrained by a character with just the broad skill.

Each of the necromantic spells described below comes in three varieties, or strengths: Ordinary, Good, and Amazing. A necromancer can begin by learning only the Ordinary variety of a spell and paying the skill cost listed for that version. As he increases in level, he can improve his knowledge of the spell to the Good level simply by paying the difference in cost between the Ordinary and Good levels. For example, the base cost for Speak With Dead is listed as 4/8/12. A necromancer can learn the Ordinary version of the spell for 4 skill points. When he wishes to learn the Good version of the spell, he must pay only 4 additional skill points (8 – 4). Likewise, when he chooses to learn the Amazing version, he need only pay 4 more points, assuming that he had already learned the Good version. If a necromancer knows multiple versions of a given spell, he may freely choose which version to cast at any given time—just because he knows how to cast an Amazing Sympathetic Curse doesn't mean he has to.

All of the spells described below require a complicated ritual, described in game terms as a complex skill check. The Ordinary versions of the spells require skill checks of Ordinary complexity, with 3 successful results needed to complete the ritual and rolls made every ten minutes. The Good versions require Good complexity checks, needing 5 successful results and rolls made every half-hour. The Amazing versions demand checks of Amazing complexity, with 8 successful results required and checks made every hour. In addition, all of these spells require components, usually the blood of a sentient or animal.

Four necromantic FX are described below: Speak with Dead, Animate Dead, Sympathetic Curse, and Sympathetic Enchantment. Others are certainly possible, subject only to the Gamemaster's imagination.

Speak With Dead

Arcane Magic, Augur spell: INT; base cost 4/8/12

This spell allows a necromancer to communicate with the departed spirit of a person (human or alien). In addition to the ritual (complex skill check) described above, casting Speak With Dead requires the necromancer to kill a chicken or other small animal, using its blood in the ritual.

Ordinary: The necromancer must be touching the corpse of the person he intends to contact, who must have been dead no longer than one week. The necromancer can ask one question for every two levels. The departed spirit answers only with "yes" or "no," so questions should be phrased appropriately.

Good: The necromancer must be within 10 meters of the corpse, which may be underground, or similarly interred. The person contacted may have been dead up to one month. The necromancer can ask up to one question per level. The spirit can answer with "yes" or "no," and can also choose between two options.

Amazing: The corpse need not be present, but the necromancer must be touching something that the deceased person once touched. The person to be contacted may be dead up to one year. The necromancer can ask two questions per level, and the spirit can answer with one or two words (which might be spoken in an eerie voice, spelled out on something like a ouija board, or perhaps written on paper with a pen).

Zombie Game Data

STR	11	(2d6+4)	INT	1 or 5
DEX	6	(2d6–1)	WIL	0
CON	10	(2d6+3)	PER	0
Durability —/15/—/—			Action check: 6+/5/2/1	
Move: Walk 4			# Actions: 1	
Reaction score: Marginal/1			Last Resorts: 0	

Attacks

Claws ×2	12/6/3	d4+2s/d6+2s/d4w	LI/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

–1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

As undead creatures, zombies are unaffected by stun or fatigue damage. Mortal damage also does not apply, since there are no functioning arteries or organs in a zombie's body. Mortal damage is treated as wound damage, however. The only thing that can stop a zombie is the total annihilation of its body, either by inflicting at least 15 points of wound damage or by incinerating it, dissolving it in acid, or some similar method.

Animate Dead

Arcane Magic, Transform spell: WIL; base cost 5/10/15

This spell allows the necromancer to breathe some semblance of life into a corpse, using it as a grisly undead servant to do his bidding. As long as bones remain, the state of decay does not affect the spell or the animated zombies. In addition to the ritual (complex skill check) described for each level of the spell, casting Animate Dead requires the necromancer to pour out a pint of human blood as a component of the spell.

Ordinary: The necromancer can animate one corpse for every 2 levels to do his bidding. He must touch the corpses to be animated. The zombies can obey only short, simple commands, which must be issued at the time they are to be performed—for example, "Kill him!" or "Lift that barrel." The zombies remain animated for one day, after which time the corpses crumble into dust.

Good: The necromancer can animate one corpse per level as zombies, again touching each one. The zombies can follow more complex commands, such as "Lift that barrel and set it down here," but the commands still must be issued at the time they are to be performed. The zombies remain animated for three days, then crumble to dust.

Amazing: The necromancer can animate three corpses per level, which must be within 10 meters. They can push their way out of their own graves if necessary (saving the necromancer some dirty work). The zombies actually have a spark of intelligence, enough to class them as subsentient and allow them to follow complex conditional commands (for example, "If anyone comes through that door, capture them and bring them to me!"). The zombies remain animated for seven days, then return to inanimate corpses.

Sympathetic Curse

Arcane Magic, Conjure spell: PER; base cost 5/10/15

Using some item belonging to the intended victim, a necromancer can lay a powerful curse on another person with this spell. This curse can inflict damage, impose penalties to certain actions, and otherwise hinder the victim in ways limited only by the necromancer's imagination. The component required is either a part of the victim's body (hair, fingernails, or blood are the most commonly used) or a possession of the victim that has had extensive contact with the victim's body (a ring he always wears, for example, or the pillow he sleeps on every night).

Ordinary: At its most basic level, the curse of sympathetic magic can inflict damage of d6+4s, unaffected by armor. It can also impose a +1 step penalty to all actions, or a +2 step penalty to actions (including skills and feat checks) based on one specific ability score. These and any other effects that might qualify as appropriately minor curses should naturally be described in a colorful fashion, rather than simply relating the game effects. For example, a +2 step penalty to Personality-related action checks could result from a hideous blemish on the victim's face, while damage might take the form of shooting pains in a specific part or parts of the anatomy (inflicted through a "voodoo doll," of course).

Good: At this level, damage inflicted by the curse increases to d6+4w, again, unmodified by armor. The curse can also impose a +2 step penalty to all actions, or a +3 step penalty to actions related to one ability score. Alternatively, one ability score can be permanently reduced by 1 point. Other effects are possible.

Amazing: At this level, damage inflicted by the curse is potentially lethal, rising to d8+4w. The curse can also impose a +3 step penalty to all actions, or reduce one ability score by 2 points. Again, other effects are possible.

Sympathetic Enchantment

Arcane Magic, Conjure spell: PER; base cost 4/8/12

This spell allows a necromancer to bend his victim's will to his own, using some object belonging to the victim. As with Sympathetic Curse, the spell requires a component that is either a part of the victim's body (hair, nail

clippings, etc.), or a close personal possession such as a ring or pillow. The victim's Will resistance modifier applies to all skill checks made to cast this spell.

Ordinary: The victim is predisposed to be friendly to the necromancer when they meet. The necromancer's advice and suggestions carry much weight, but the victim will not obey them if they contradict good sense. The victim defends the necromancer in a reasonable argument, but not if the necromancer's position is completely unreasonable or loathsome to the victim's beliefs. The victim will not take the necromancer's side in a physical confrontation, unless he perceives the necromancer as an innocent victim of violence. The spell lasts for one day per level of the necromancer.

Good: The victim obeys the necromancer's direct suggestion, a complex command that can include conditional and time-sensitive clauses. The victim obeys the command even if it seems nonsensical, dangerous, or repellent. The necromancer must speak the command in a language that the victim can understand, and the victim must be able to hear it clearly, for the spell to be effective. However, the necromancer can issue the command at any time within twenty-four hours of completing the spell casting. Once the victim has carried out the command to the best of his ability, the spell is ended.

Amazing: The victim falls under the complete mental control of the necromancer, at a range of up to 1 km per level. The necromancer's body falls into a trance-like state, while his mind occupies and controls the victim's body. The victim's mind is effectively asleep. Anything that his body does while under the necromancer's control is at best vaguely remembered, as if in a dream. If the body is killed while possessed by the necromancer, both victim and necromancer perish. The possession lasts for up to one hour per level of the necromancer.

Black Magic in the Campaign

In a contemporary or near-future campaign: Black magic and necromancy are most commonly associated with the voodoo practitioners of Haiti, but similar sorcerers could appear anywhere in a contemporary campaign. You could postulate the existence of a human subspecies with a gift for black magic or make it available to anyone with the twisted desire to cross the barriers between life and death. Necromancers could even appear on Earth as members of an alien species. Regardless of their origin, they generally use their magic for their own selfish ends. Heroes in a technothriller campaign might find their most sophisticated scientific gadgetry is barely a match for the magical power of a necromancer and his zombie agents.

In a far-future campaign: Necromancy could be a manifestation of an alien species' native religious beliefs. Starfaring colonists might find a native rebellion led by necromancers threatening to drive them back to their starships, while explorers could meet a similarly hostile response from the apparently primitive natives of the planet they're exploring. Alternatively, an evil emperor might have a necromancer as his closest advisor—sort of a Darth Vader figure. Rebel heroes must contend with the necromancer's magic as well as the empire's troops in their adventures.

Evil Unleashed

Alien artifacts represent a third way to introduce themes of horror into an ALTERNITY campaign. As described in Chapter 12 of the *Gamemaster Guide*, alien artifacts are powerful scientific devices created by an advanced civilization. Heroes might possess an alien artifact as a perk or a flaw, or they might encounter them in the course of their adventures. In any case, these artifacts can be a vehicle for horror, simply by assuming that the alien civilization that created them was malevolent or misguided in their methods.

Even a malevolent alien race would not create devices that were harmful to the user—at least not if they intended to use the items. Still, enough of the creator's evil intentions might remain within the device that even a hero who intends to use the object for the noblest aims slowly becomes corrupted by its influence. Using such an artifact might slowly sap the hero's will, until he comes under the control of a malevolent intelligence that lives within the device. Or, he might slowly but inexorably find his moral outlook changing for the worse.

Misguided artifact creators might simply be unaware of the true nature of the forces they are dealing with. Scientific creations intended for good purposes can develop a life of their own and turn toward evil against their creator's intentions (Frankenstein's monster being the classic example). Or an alien artifact might simply work differently for a human hero than for the alien race that created it, based on differences in physiology or psychology. These differences can create a world of horror for the unfortunate hero.

A horror campaign can revolve around a single, incredibly malevolent alien artifact that is either in the possession of the heroes (for example, Tolkien's One Ring) or extending its malignant influence from afar. A campaign might involve a number of lesser artifacts with a single creator that have all worked their corrupting influence on unsuspecting members of the supporting cast. The heroes' ultimate aim will probably be to destroy the artifacts, but initially they could just be collecting them for study. (Studying such devices has its own perils, as the heroes will discover eventually—and then their goal should turn toward destroying them.)

The Temple of the Healer

This ancient alien temple lies on a remote planet—one of Saturn's moons, perhaps, or an alien world around a more distant star. Dedicated to a long-forgotten alien deity of healing, the temple is an odd assortment of monoliths in various shapes and sizes, all formed of a smooth green mineral akin to jade. An outer courtyard bounded by pillars surrounds the inner sanctuary, the entrance to which is only 1 meter in diameter. The inside of the sanctuary has barely enough room for a large human to lie down, and it feels rather like a coffin or cryogenic chamber.

The temple's primary function, of course, is to provide healing. It possesses the Regenerator power at an Amazing level, healing anyone who lies in the sanctuary chamber at the rate of 1

stun, wound, and mortal point (as needed) per round for up to 12 rounds per day. In addition, it possesses the Resuscitator power at a Good level, allowing a dead person placed within the temple to attempt a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check with a –2 bonus, with success indicating that he has returned to life. (See the full description of this power in the ALTERNITY *Gamemaster Guide*, chapter 12.)

Humans (and most aliens) who use the temple quickly notice a minor drawback to using the temple's power in this fashion: skin and tissue knit back together by the temple's healing ability are not human. When the temple heals wound points, the difference is primarily cosmetic: The skin over the wounded area grows back with a slight green tint, and the new skin is hard and cold to the touch. The healed person must make an immediate horror check upon discovering the difference in the new skin. In addition, he immediately suffers the effect of the Poor Looks flaw (but gains no bonus skill points): a +1 penalty to Personality-based skill checks when appearance could be a factor in the encounter. If the temple healed more than half of the person's total wound rating, the penalty increases to +2.

When the temple restores mortal damage, however, the alteration is more significant, as essential body processes are restored and changed in the process. The effects depend on the total number of mortal points the temple has healed in that person, in proportion to the person's total mortal rating. These drawbacks are derived from mutant drawbacks described in Chapter 13 of the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*.

Up to one-quarter of mortal rating: The healed person gains a slight environmental sensitivity, causing him to suffer a +2 penalty to all skill and action checks when operating in a light-gravity environment. His appearance is somewhat alien; he suffers a +2 penalty to all Personality-based skill checks. He must make a horror check with a +1 penalty immediately upon realizing what has happened to him.

Up to one half of mortal rating: The healed person develops a weak immune system, causing a +2 penalty to all Constitution feat checks to resist disease or infection. (Again, see Chapter 13 in the *Player's Handbook*.)

Up to mortal rating: The healed person suffers from slow reflexes, inflicting a +1 penalty on all action check rolls. In addition, the person is now sufficiently inhuman that he inspires fear and loathing in everyone he meets. He makes Personality-based skill checks with a +4 penalty, and a Critical Failure on such a roll forces his intended target to make a fear check.

Up to twice mortal rating: The penalty for operating in a light-gravity environment increases to +3, and checks to resist infection are made at +3 as well. The healed person must also make a madness check as soon as he becomes aware of the changes to his system.

Over twice mortal rating: The person's system can no longer reconcile what are essentially the two halves of his body—human and alien. He dies a painful and horrible death, after sinking into utter madness.

Table 8: The Seven Stones of Midnight

Stone	Primary power	Secondary power
1	Cybercontrol	Cyberconscious
2	Dark Matter Attack	Dark Matter Control
3	Energy Dispersal	Displacement
4	Healing Touch	Regeneration
5	Precognition	Postcognition
6	Stealth Field	Photonic Manipulation
7	Telepathy	Empathy

The Seven Stones of Midnight

These artifacts are seven identical, midnight-blue spheres of unknown mineral composition. Each is roughly the size of a golf ball, harder than diamond, and light as a feather. They might be found separately or together. They could appear at the core of a meteorite, in the middle of a rock sample brought back from Mars, or in an ornate case on an alien world. Their origins are completely unknown.

Though they are identical in form and appearance, the Seven Stones of Midnight are varied in function. Each functions only when held tightly in the hand (or analogous appendage). Each has one Good primary power and one Ordinary secondary power, as shown on **Table 8.**

For all their incredible powers, the Seven Stones of Midnight each house a malign and alien intelligence. Whatever its nature and origins, this intelligence clearly has the power to insinuate itself into the minds of those who use the stone. Whenever the user is in a situation where he could do something evil (intentionally causing pain and suffering, stealing something important, etc.), he must make a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check to avoid doing it. He lies unscrupulously to cover his actions and even just to cause trouble. A week after using a Stone's powers for the first time, the user makes these Resolve skill checks with a +1 penalty. This penalty increases by an additional +1 for every week that passes.

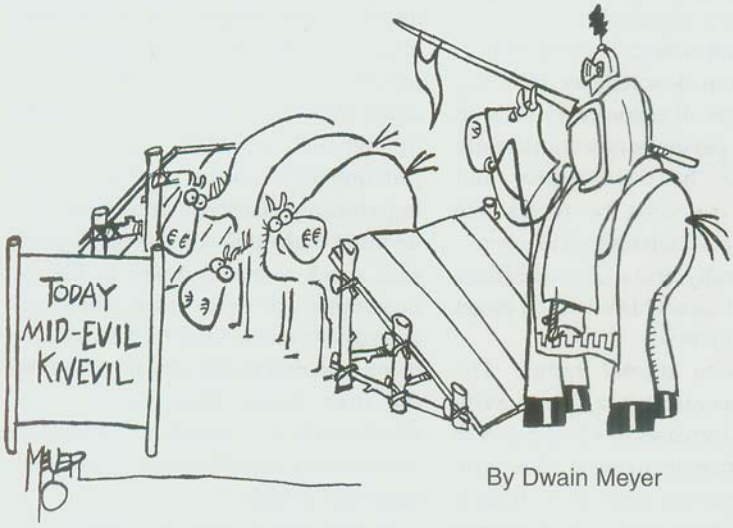
In addition to this inexorable shift toward evil, the Stones all possess the Extreme drawback of Mental Instability. Also, they are Infamous Devices (as a Slight drawback), meaning that those who possess them are sure to find themselves targets for all sorts of villains who would love to get their hands on the power commanded by the Seven Stones.

No One Can Hear You Scream

Fear, horror, and madness checks can help to emphasize a horror mood in a science-fiction game. What creates the horror, however, is the situation the heroes face—as the *Gamemaster Guide* puts it, "It's your job to create situations in which the players would never want to find themselves" (page 181). Using aliens found in the STAR*DRIVE campaign or other horrors, such situations should be easy to create.

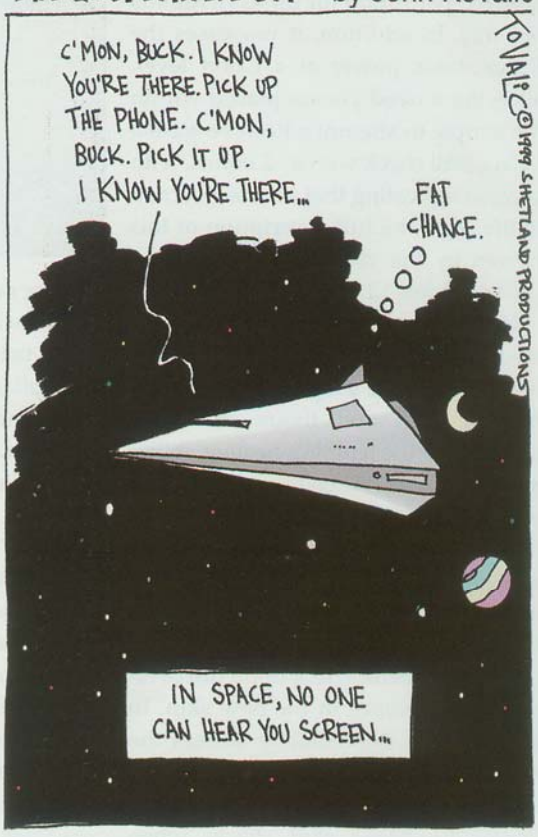
Whether it's the 19th century or the 26th, James has a taste for Gothic horror that won't go away. Lately he's been trying to figure out what the Red Death is up to in the Verge.

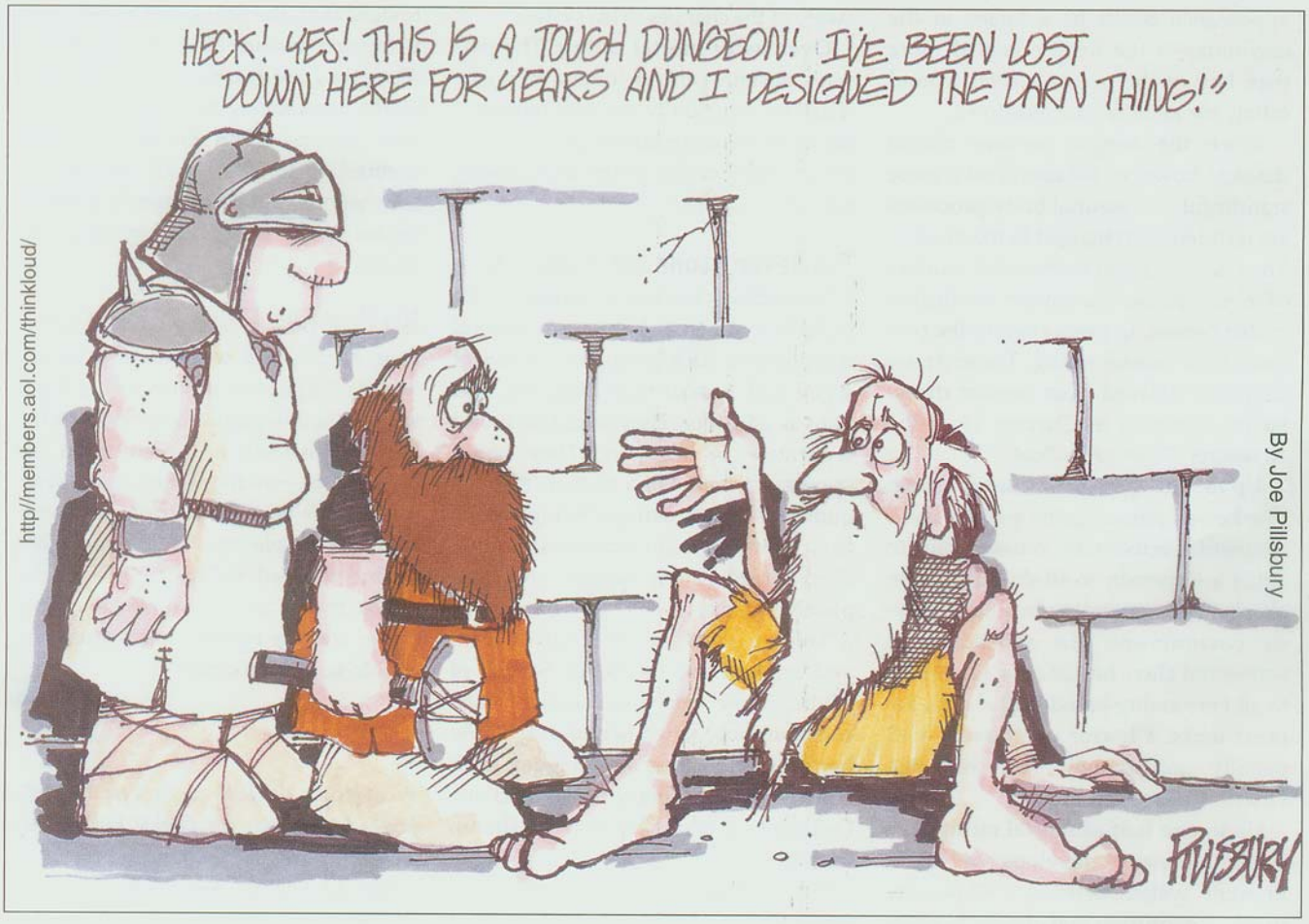
Dragon Mirth™



By Dwain Meyer

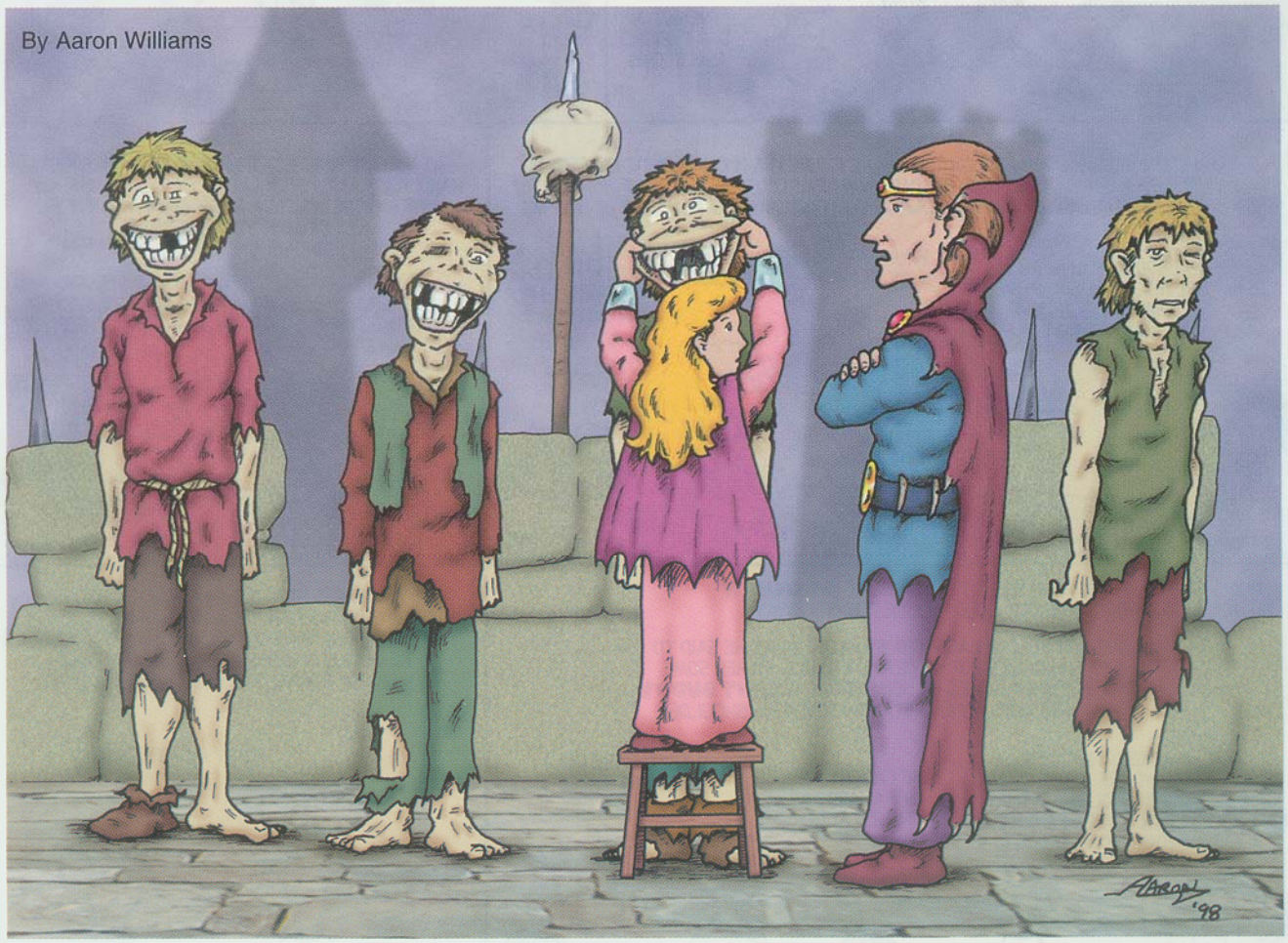
The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic


C'MON, BUCK. I KNOW YOU'RE THERE. PICK UP THE PHONE. C'MON, BUCK. PICK IT UP. I KNOW YOU'RE THERE...
FAT CHANCE.
IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREEN...
KOVALIC ©1999 SHETLAND PRODUCTIONS


HECK! YES! THIS IS A TOUGH DUNGEON! I'VE BEEN LOST DOWN HERE FOR YEARS AND I DESIGNED THE DARN THING!"
http://members.aol.com/thinkloud/
By Joe Pillsbury
PILLSBURY

By Richard Tomasic

"It's a fine line between fantasy and reality–some days finer than others."

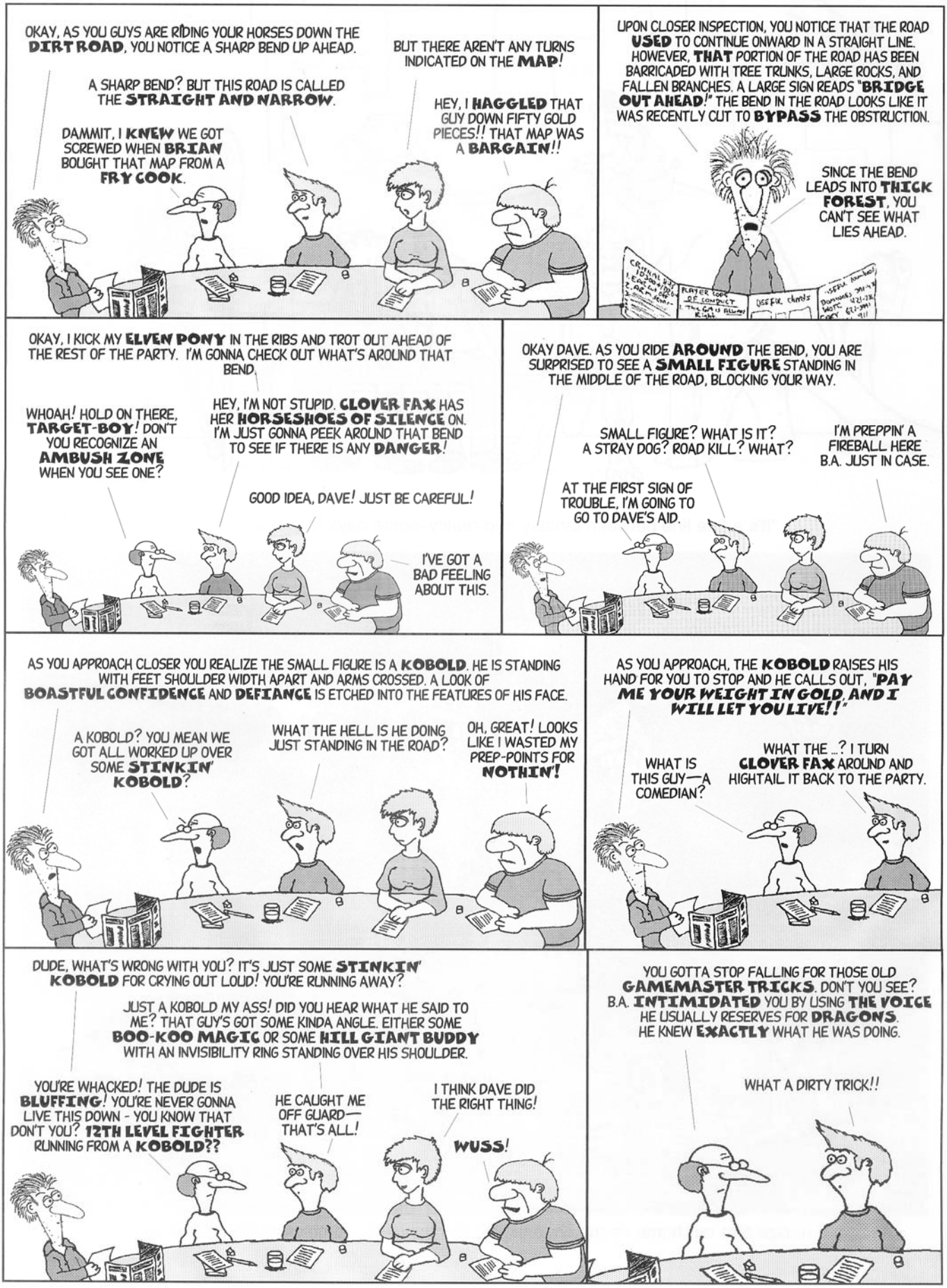


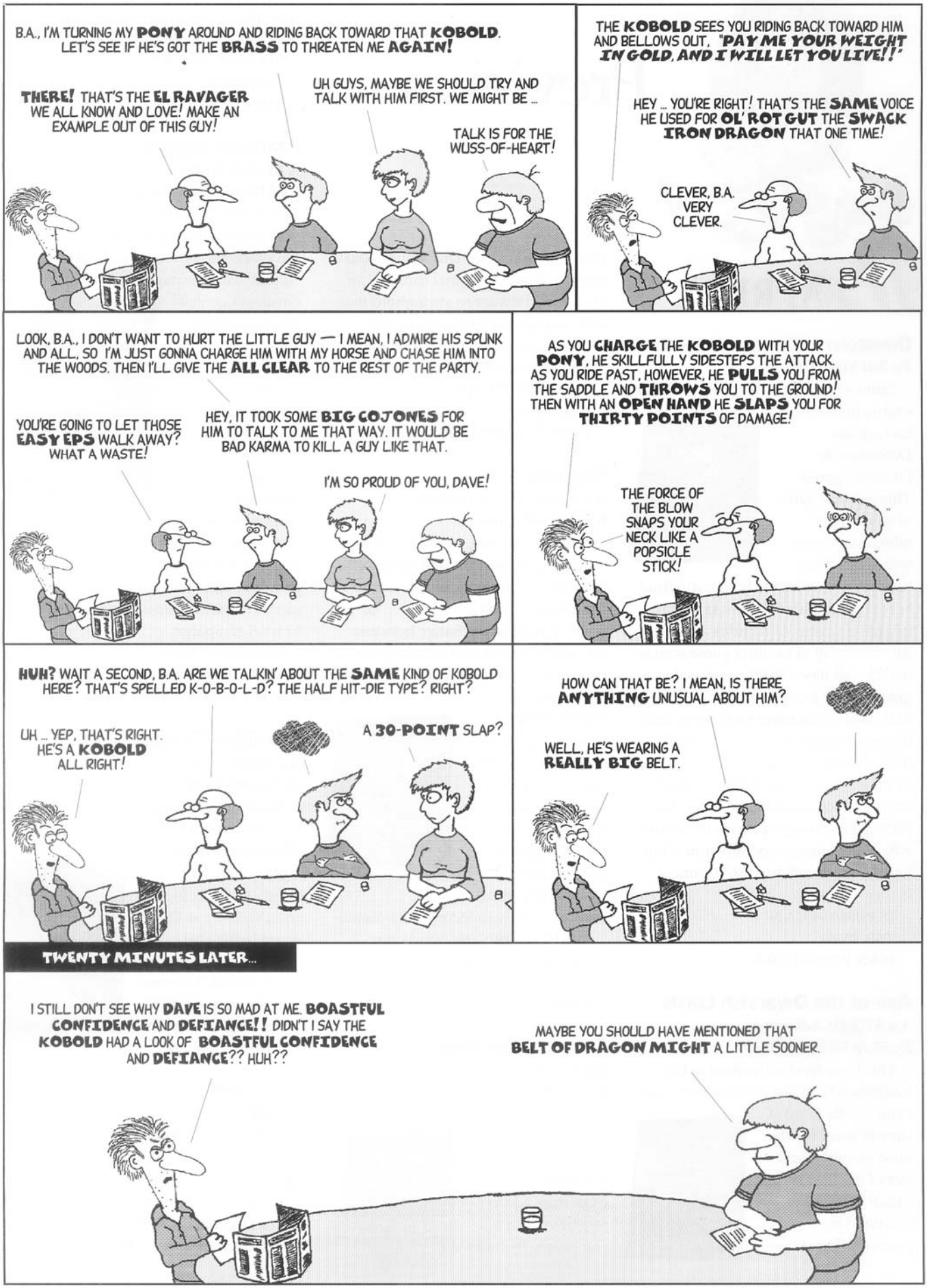
By Aaron Williams

"I realize that our home needs cheering up, but leave the zombies alone, sweetheart."

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN


OKAY, AS YOU GUYS ARE RIDING YOUR HORSES DOWN THE DIRT ROAD, YOU NOTICE A SHARP BEND UP AHEAD.
A SHARP BEND? BUT THIS ROAD IS CALLED THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW.
DAMMIT, I KNEW WE GOT SCREWED WHEN BRIAN BOUGHT THAT MAP FROM A FRY COOK.
BUT THERE AREN'T ANY TURNS INDICATED ON THE MAP!
HEY, I HAGGLED THAT GUY DOWN FIFTY GOLD PIECES!! THAT MAP WAS A BARGAIN!!
UPON CLOSER INSPECTION, YOU NOTICE THAT THE ROAD USED TO CONTINUE ONWARD IN A STRAIGHT LINE. HOWEVER, THAT PORTION OF THE ROAD HAS BEEN BARRICADED WITH TREE TRUNKS, LARGE ROCKS, AND FALLEN BRANCHES. A LARGE SIGN READS "BRIDGE OUT AHEAD!" THE BEND IN THE ROAD LOOKS LIKE IT WAS RECENTLY CUT TO BYPASS THE OBSTRUCTION.
SINCE THE BEND LEADS INTO THICK FOREST, YOU CAN'T SEE WHAT LIES AHEAD.
OKAY, I KICK MY ELVEN PONY IN THE RIBS AND TROT OUT AHEAD OF THE REST OF THE PARTY. I'M GONNA CHECK OUT WHAT'S AROUND THAT BEND.
WHOAH! HOLD ON THERE, TARGET-BOY! DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE AN AMBUSH ZONE WHEN YOU SEE ONE?
HEY, I'M NOT STUPID. CLOVER FAX HAS HER HORSESHOES OF SILENCE ON. I'M JUST GONNA PEEK AROUND THAT BEND TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY DANGER!
GOOD IDEA, DAVE! JUST BE CAREFUL!
I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
OKAY DAVE. AS YOU RIDE AROUND THE BEND, YOU ARE SURPRISED TO SEE A SMALL FIGURE STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, BLOCKING YOUR WAY.
SMALL FIGURE? WHAT IS IT? A STRAY DOG? ROAD KILL? WHAT?
I'M PREPPIN' A FIREBALL HERE B.A. JUST IN CASE.
AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE, I'M GOING TO GO TO DAVE'S AID.
AS YOU APPROACH CLOSER YOU REALIZE THE SMALL FIGURE IS A KOBOLD. HE IS STANDING WITH FEET SHOULDER WIDTH APART AND ARMS CROSSED. A LOOK OF BOASTFUL CONFIDENCE AND DEFIANCE IS ETCHED INTO THE FEATURES OF HIS FACE.
A KOBOLD? YOU MEAN WE GOT ALL WORKED UP OVER SOME STINKIN' KOBOLD?
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING JUST STANDING IN THE ROAD?
OH, GREAT! LOOKS LIKE I WASTED MY PREP-POINTS FOR NOTHIN'!
AS YOU APPROACH, THE KOBOLD RAISES HIS HAND FOR YOU TO STOP AND HE CALLS OUT, "PAY ME YOUR WEIGHT IN GOLD AND I WILL LET YOU LIVE!!"
WHAT IS THIS GUY—A COMEDIAN?
WHAT THE ...? I TURN CLOVER FAX AROUND AND HIGHTAIL IT BACK TO THE PARTY.
DUDE, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? IT'S JUST SOME STINKIN' KOBOLD FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! YOU'RE RUNNING AWAY?
JUST A KOBOLD MY ASS! DID YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID TO ME? THAT GUY'S GOT SOME KINDA ANGLE. EITHER SOME BOO-KOO MAGIC OR SOME HILL GIANT BUDDY WITH AN INVISIBILITY RING STANDING OVER HIS SHOULDER.
YOU'RE WHACKED! THE DUDE IS BLUFFING! YOU'RE NEVER GONNA LIVE THIS DOWN - YOU KNOW THAT DON'T YOU? 12TH LEVEL FIGHTER RUNNING FROM A KOBOLD??
HE CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD— THAT'S ALL!
I THINK DAVE DID THE RIGHT THING!
WUSS!
YOU GOTTA STOP FALLING FOR THOSE OLD GAMEMASTER TRICKS. DON'T YOU SEE? B.A. INTIMIDATED YOU BY USING THE VOICE HE USUALLY RESERVES FOR DRAGONS. HE KNEW EXACTLY WHAT HE WAS DOING.
WHAT A DIRTY TRICK!!


B.A., I'M TURNING MY PONY AROUND AND RIDING BACK TOWARD THAT KOBOLD. LET'S SEE IF HE'S GOT THE BRASS TO THREATEN ME AGAIN!
THERE! THAT'S THE EL RAVAGER WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE! MAKE AN EXAMPLE OUT OF THIS GUY!
UH GUYS, MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY AND TALK WITH HIM FIRST. WE MIGHT BE ...
TALK IS FOR THE WUSS-OF-HEART!
THE KOBOLD SEES YOU RIDING BACK TOWARD HIM AND BELLOWS OUT, "PAY ME YOUR WEIGHT IN GOLD, AND I WILL LET YOU LIVE!!"
HEY ... YOU'RE RIGHT! THAT'S THE SAME VOICE HE USED FOR OL' ROT GUT THE SWACK IRON DRAGON THAT ONE TIME!
CLEVER, B.A. VERY CLEVER.
LOOK, B.A., I DON'T WANT TO HURT THE LITTLE GUY — I MEAN, I ADMIRE HIS SPUNK AND ALL, SO I'M JUST GONNA CHARGE HIM WITH MY HORSE AND CHASE HIM INTO THE WOODS. THEN I'LL GIVE THE ALL CLEAR TO THE REST OF THE PARTY.
YOU'RE GOING TO LET THOSE EASY EPS WALK AWAY? WHAT A WASTE!
HEY, IT TOOK SOME BIG COJONES FOR HIM TO TALK TO ME THAT WAY. IT WOULD BE BAD KARMA TO KILL A GUY LIKE THAT.
I'M SO PROUD OF YOU, DAVE!
AS YOU CHARGE THE KOBOLD WITH YOUR PONY, HE SKILLFULLY SIDESTEPS THE ATTACK. AS YOU RIDE PAST, HOWEVER, HE PULLS YOU FROM THE SADDLE AND THROWS YOU TO THE GROUND! THEN WITH AN OPEN HAND HE SLAPS YOU FOR THIRTY POINTS OF DAMAGE!
THE FORCE OF THE BLOW SNAPS YOUR NECK LIKE A POPSICLE STICK!
HUH? WAIT A SECOND, B.A. ARE WE TALKIN' ABOUT THE SAME KIND OF KOBOLD HERE? THAT'S SPELLED K-O-B-O-L-D? THE HALF HIT-DIE TYPE? RIGHT?
UH ... YEP, THAT'S RIGHT. HE'S A KOBOLD ALL RIGHT!
A 30-POINT SLAP?
HOW CAN THAT BE? I MEAN, IS THERE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT HIM?
WELL, HE'S WEARING A REALLY BIG BELT.
TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
I STILL DON'T SEE WHY DAVE IS SO MAD AT ME. BOASTFUL CONFIDENCE AND DEFIANCE!! DIDN'T I SAY THE KOBOLD HAD A LOOK OF BOASTFUL CONFIDENCE AND DEFIANCE?? HUH??
MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE MENTIONED THAT BELT OF DRAGON MIGHT A LITTLE SOONER.

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Send story ideas to jollyrb@aol.com or KODT, 1003 Monroe Pike, Marion, IN 46953

Previews

APRIL

Dungeons & Dragons® game

By Bill Slavicsek

Enter a world of adventure with the undisputed king of fantasy, the Dungeons & Dragons game! This exciting game of combat and adventure comes with everything needed to play in one box. Individual hero folders allow players to create unique characters. Includes an adventure book full of exciting game scenarios. The all-new D&D® game makes a great gift for parents to give to their kids, as it encourages teamwork, reading, social interaction, and imagination. Players can start with this game, or they can advance to this product from the D&D Fast-Play Games. It's perfect for younger players or anyone who loves fantasy and adventure but has never played any D&D games before.

$9.99/$14.99 CAN
TSR 11450
ISBN 0-7869-1450-5

Axe of the Dwarvish Lords

An AD&D® Adventure
By Skip Williams

This high-level adventure in the tradition of *The Rod of Seven Parts* and *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* involves the most powerful artifact of the Dwarven Clans! Features a wealth of background information, plenty of maps and DM advice, and a massive dungeon-crawl through an abandoned dwarven stronghold that will keep player groups busy for weeks to come. For 13th- to 15th-level player characters.

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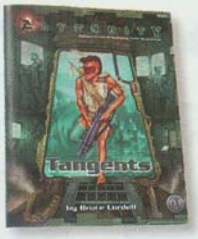
ISBN 0-7869-1347-9

Tangents

An Alternity® Accessory
By Bruce R. Cordell



Imagine a world, parallel to ours, where the Roman Empire never fell … or where intelligent dinosaurs rule continent-spanning empires … or where a nuclear exchange between superpowers has reduced the population by 90%. *Tangents* allows Alternity game players to visit all these worlds and more! Also includes full rules for dimensional travel, play tips, adventure hooks to get the Gamemaster started, and information on how to incorporate dimensional travel into any campaign.

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By Bill Slavicsek

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A Marvel Super Heroes™ Adventure
By Mike Selinker and Teeuwynn Woodruff

This adventure anthology features the Fantastic Four, with situations ripped from the pages of the World's Greatest Comics Magazine! The Marvel Super Heroes Adventure Game is hot, and this product promises to add to the anticipation as the heroes face the villainous escapades of Doctor Doom, the Skrulls, and even the planet-eating menace of Galactus! Each adventure provides an evening of fun, or they can be combined into any ongoing Marvel campaign.

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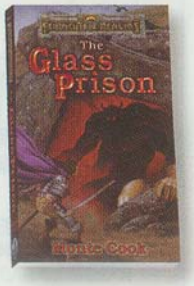
By Monte Cook



From the most popular AD&D campaign setting comes the story of Vheod Runechild—half human, half fiend—and his flight from the Abyss. On a quest to find his human nature on Toril, Vheod discovers that the dangers of the nether region respect no worldly boundaries.

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Edited by Martin H. Greenberg

A collection of short stories reveal-

ing TSR's exciting new SF setting. Contributing authors include Robert Silverberg and Karen Haber, Robin Wayne Bailey, Gary Braunbeck, Matthew J. Costello, Diane Duane, William H. Keith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Dean Wesley Smith, Michael A. Stackpole, and many other noteworthy SF writers.

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MAY

Priest's Spell Compendium, Volume One

An AD&D Game Accessory
Edited by Jon Pickens

It begins here—the monumental task of collecting every official Priest spell for the AD&D game from a wide variety of sources, including many tomes that are now out of print! All spells have been updated so they can be included in any AD&D game. This is the official reference book and definitive source for Priest spells in the AD&D game.

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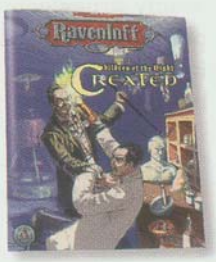
AD&D RAVENLOFT® Adventures
By TSR Staff

Thirteen golems—each a unique and horrifying creature constructed of myriad materials—are presented with complete descriptions and short adventures. This is the fourth release in the Children of the Night series, based upon the tremendously popular Van Richten's Guides. These terrifying creatures fit easily into an ongoing RAVENLOFT campaign or any AD&D game setting. Suitable for all player character levels.



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By Steve Miller and Stan! Brown

This special collection invites fans old and new to play the adventures that launched the DRAGONLANCE saga. Fifteen years ago, the fourteen-part DRAGONLANCE adventure cycle redefined roleplaying adventures and laid the foundation for one of the best-selling fantasy settings of all time. This anniversary edition puts the classic adventures back into print for the first time in years, offers material never before presented in adventure form, and contains information for using the adventures with either the AD&D game or the SAGA® rules. The *DRAGONLANCE Classic 15th Anniversary Edition* has been revised to afford greater flexibility of play. DMs can recreate the original Chronicles trilogy by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman or let their players create new heroes to blaze their own legends across the world of Krynn.

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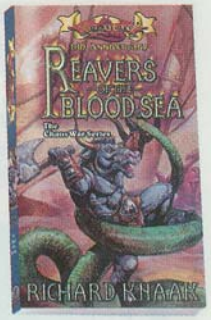
During the hottest summer in memory, minotaurs fight against the Knights of Takhisis, into whose hands their god Sargonnas has delivered them. In the midst of the conflict, the armies of Chaos plunge into the heart of Ansalon. Now the minotaur warrior Aryx must unite his people and their enemy, the Knights, against the monstrous servants of Chaos. If he succeeds, the two sides may forge a bond that will change Krynn for all time. If he fails, then they will all perish.



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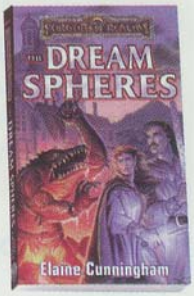
Welcome to Waterdeep, the City of Splendors. Here, everything imaginable is for sale. Even dreams can be purchased, if one is willing to pay the price. When the sale of dream spheres threatens the life of his newfound half-sister, Danilo Thann joins forces with Arilyn Moonblade to uncover the source of this deadly trade. Their search leads them into the dark heart of Waterdeep, and to personal secrets that could destroy them both.



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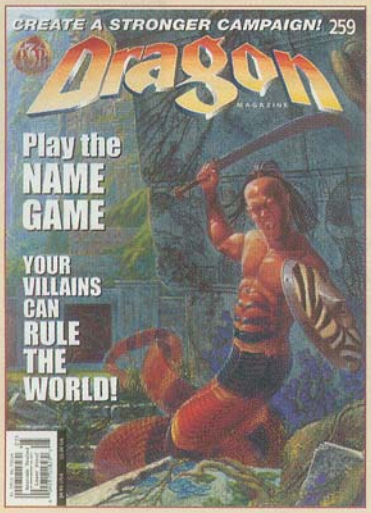
JUNE

Return to the Keep on the Borderlands

An AD&D Silver Anniversary Adventure
By John D. Rateliff

Return to the Keep on the Borderlands and the Caves of Chaos, where fell

Coming Attraction



Cover by Stephen Daniele

Designer Demesnes

By Mark A. Hart

New rules for creating your own kingdom, complete with personalized flaws and special abilities.

Master of the World

By Stephen Kenson

A villain's primer on world domination. What's with these guys, anyway?

What Do You Mean, We Lost?

By Raff Notaro

This issue's "Dungeon Mastery" shows how to salvage a campaign when the PCs fail.

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By Johnathan Richards

Nasty new creatures that just want to be close to you.

Locked and Loaded

By Bruce R. Cordell

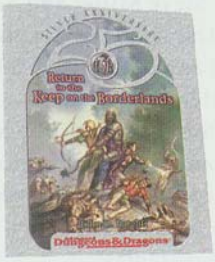
Post-apocalyptic weapons from the world of *Fallout 2*.

Plus "Knights of the Dinner Table," "SAGE ADVICE™," "DRAGONMIRTH™," FORGOTTEN REALMS® fiction, and more.

$4.95 U.S./$6.50 CAN
TSR Product No. 082259

creatures lurk and wait for unwary adventurers. This presentation of the famous E. Gary Gygax D&D adventure allows characters to re-explore the bestselling adventure of all time! Updated for use with the AD&D game, this adventure expands upon the details of the original, providing even more thrills for beginning-level characters.

This re-telling and sequel to the classic adventure is part of the year-long Silver Anniversary celebration. Players and Dungeon Masters will want to see how their new AD&D characters fare against the original proving ground for D&D heroes. Includes an updated map of the original adventuring region, as well as an expanded storyline in the tradition of the early days of D&D.



Whether a DM's players once braved the Keep with their player characters or have only heard stories of this dangerous and wondrous place, *Return to the Keep on the Borderlands* provides plenty of adventuring action in this 25th year of the greatest roleplaying game of all time!

$12.95/$18.95 CAN
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An AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS Accessory
By Joseph Wolf

Directly below glorious Waterdeep, adjacent to infamous Undermountain, lies a city where good and evil put aside their eternal conflict to live and let live: Skullport. Strange sites and activities, both universally shunned and pursued, abound in this subterranean "Casablanca." This resource supports FORGOTTEN REALMS campaigns set in and around the City of Splendors, but Skullport can be used as its own gaming environment, or it can be adapted for any world that needs a city of thieves.

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The Silent Blade

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By R.A. Salvatore

A paperback reprint of R.A. Salvatore's chronicle of the adventures of Drizzt Do'Urden, Wulfgar, and their greatest foe: the assassin Artemis Entreri.

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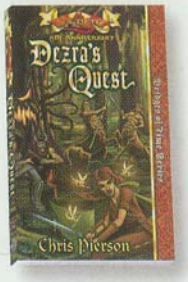
During Krynn's Second Cataclysm an ambitious centaur chieftain makes a terrible pact with Chaos. Ten years later, smarting under the consequences of that pact, a lone centaur journeys to Solace, seeking help from Caramon, an aging Hero of the Lance.



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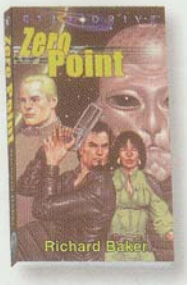
By Richard Baker

Peter Sokolov, a bounty hunter and cybernetic killer for hire, is caught up in a deadly struggle for power and supremacy in the black abyss between the stars.



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Dragon® MAGAZINE

DESIGN A SHEEN

FOR THE AD&D® GAME

Bruce Cordell's "Mage vs. Machine" article in this issue presents several intriguing ways to introduce technology into your AD&D® campaign. The article also presents DMs with new adversaries to challenge their weary, dragonslaying PCs: the sheens.

"Sheens" are forms of machine life that live in cysts locked away in remote corners of your AD&D world. They come in all shapes and sizes. The "Mage vs. Machine" article introduces us to four new sheen types: walkers, drifters, dashers, and renders. We'd like you to design a new classification of sheen, much as the article does.

Provide us with a detailed description of your sheen, and tell us what function it serves in the machine cyst. Give us the "game stats" for your sheen, using the format presented in the "Mage vs. Machine" article.

Each entry is limited to 1,000 words, although shorter entries are acceptable. Entries will be judged on originality, creativity, and rules compatability. **All entries must be received by May 28, 1999.**

❖ ❖ ❖

The winning sheen will be illustrated by TSR artist Todd Lockwood, and the winning entrant will receive the original art by Todd Lockwood!

"Design a Sheen" Contest Rules

1. **Entry:** To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your proposed Sheen Description ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") *Dragon® Magazine* "Design a Sheen" Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries may not exceed 1,000 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), May 28, 1999. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's format, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. **Originality of Entry:** All Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. **Use and Ownership of Entry Info:** In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. **Prizes:** The winning Entrant of the "Design a Sheen" Contest shall receive an original illustration of his or her entry, signed by Todd Lockwood (value $1000.00 U.S.).

5. **Eligibility:** Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Noncompliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. **Restrictions:** Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to *Dragon Magazine* "Design a Sheen" Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by June 14, 1999. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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"Design a Sheen" Contest

Name : _____

Address : _____

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Phone: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

ProFiles

TODD LOCKWOOD

From beer cans and satellite dishes to the DRAGONLANCE® and RAVENLOFT® settings, Todd Lockwood is **an artist with big visions** who loves his work.

by Stephen Kenson

Born in Boulder, Colorado, Todd Lockwood began his artistic career after graduating from the Colorado Institute of Art. He worked for a design agency for a year and a half, winning numerous awards, including a silver medal in the Art Directors Club of New York annual show. He then decided to focus his career on illustration, doing freelance advertising work for some fifteen years.

"Coors was one of my biggest clients," says Todd. "I could paint beer cans in my sleep. At one point I had some covers I had done for *Satellite Orbit* magazine. For years after that I was 'the satellite dish guy.' I came to really hate satellite dishes and beer cans. If I had ever had a painting with both a beer can and a satellite dish in it, my ad career would have been complete."

While working as an illustrator, Todd was also an avid DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game player and a fan of fantasy artwork. "I flipped when TSR started having really good art in their products," he says. "Jeff Easley's stuff particularly interested me: so moody and fluid, so deft. Then Brom came along and really blew my doors off."

Frustrated with the limitations of the advertising business, Todd decided to try his hand at fantasy and science-fiction illustration. "My first artistic influence, like so many in this field, was Frank Frazetta. Later came Michael Whelan, though I had some ad-world influences, too, particularly after I started art school. But I really wanted to be Michael Whelan."

Todd first did some covers for *Asimov's* science fiction magazine. "That was the beginning. I felt revived, I was finally painting things that interested me!" Afterward, he took his *Asimov's* covers and some other work to WorldCon in Winnipeg, to show to artists and art directors in the fantasy and science-fiction field.

"It was a revelation!" Lockwood says. "I met other artists and saw so much amazing work. I met Michael Whelan, who responded very favorably to the black and white work I had done, particularly 'Cerberus.' I went home inspired and determined to do more and better work. I got more magazine work and started building a portfolio of published work in the field I had always wanted to be a part of."

Todd's first work in the gaming industry was illustrating cards for Chaosium and for Phil Foglio's *XXXenophile* card game. "Then a very good friend and a talented, wonderful guy, David Martin, suggested me to an art director at TSR®. I had sent TSR portfolios in the past, but now I had a real fantasy portfolio. The art director, Stephen Daniele, gave me a bunch of character portraits for one of the SPELLFIRE® decks, then some book covers for TSR. An opportunity to work for TSR full-time came along in 1996, and I jumped at it."

Lockwood's work for TSR includes art for the RAVENLOFT, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, and DRAGONLANCE campaign settings, as well as the cover for the DRAGONLANCE Fifteenth Anniversary adventure this May. He is also painting the cover illustration for *Spine of the World*, the sequel to R.A. Salvatore's FORGOTTEN REALMS novel *Silent Blade*, which he also illustrated.

"The work I have done for TSR, especially in the past six to eight months, is some of the best work of my career. I have learned an awful lot—this is an incredible group of people to work with, very inspiring." In addition to his work at TSR, Lockwood is Vice President of ASFA (the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists), which sponsors the Chesley Awards for fantasy art at the World Science Fiction Convention. (Lockwood has won three Chesleys himself.) He also helped insure that members can display their work on the ASFA web site at www.asfa-art.org.

Some of Todd's favorite work includes his early magazine illustrations. "'Cerberus' won a lot of recognition and opened a lot of doors for me," he says. "It's the darkest thing I've ever done. 'Kali' was good for me, too. They were both personal pieces, so it's very gratifying that they were so well received." Each of these illustrations won a World Fantasy Convention award and appeared in *Spectrum*. Anyone interested can check out Todd's work at the ASFA web site.

Now, if he could only paint a fantasy illustration involving a beer can and a satellite dish …

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